The Journals of Mary Butts
Edited by Nathalie Blondel

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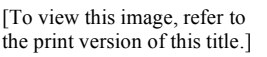

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For Charlotte Butler Blondel who was born after the project began and Michèle Blondel, née Hadet, who died before it was completed.

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Introduction

■

Art is the god you have not seen.
20 December 1918

I blessed the power which has filled my life with poetry.
15 October 1929

What is a journal? Where does it end and autobiography, biography, social and literary history, commonplace book, essay, notebook, poetry, narrative, draft-book, appointment book begin? To read the British writer Mary Butts's journal is to experience a confounding of the boundaries between all these genres, for it is the place where she articulates her "thinking into; over & under & round" the people, places, books, events, ideas of her craft—that of a writer (14 January 1928). From its opening pages in July 1916 when she was twenty-five until its abrupt fragmentation in February–March 1937 when she suddenly collapsed of peritonitis and died, Butts's preoccupation was to find ways to "say the unsayable," to convey "an unknown in the terms of the known" (May 1925, 28 July 1929). Alongside her older and younger contemporaries (Eliot, Pound, H.D., Joyce, Ford, Lewis, Richardson, Woolf, Stein—all of whom she knew), Butts crossed that no-man's-land of the Great War from the Edwardian era to the so-called Long Weekend of the 1920s and 1930s, and she searched for her "age's formula" (October 1925).

This very word "formula" reveals the extent to which literature and all the arts were incorporating the huge scientific and technological developments of the early twentieth century—from physics (Einstein, Maxwell, Eddington) to psychology (Jung, Freud); from mathematics (Whitehead) to philosophy (Sullivan, Russell, Dunne); from gramophone recording (Berlin, Robeson) to the cinema (Man Ray, Lang). Butts contemplated all

these figures in her journal as she saw and experienced the inevitable changes from "that very different England, that of 1890" where she was born and subsequently brought up in rural Dorset amid gas and candlelight.[1] Her lifetime unfolded within, and was an expression of, Modernity, where everything was in constant flux and increased motion, was noisier and brighter. By the time of her death in 1937, again in a rural setting, her house was lit by electricity, "the bath boils, the oven bakes" and there was a radio.[2]

If the world was unstable and uncertain, it was also exciting and full of possibilities. "I wish I knew more mathematics," she wrote regretfully on 10 December 1919. "How does the mind move to Einstein's physics?" she asked herself in October 1925: "What is the correspondence?" The emotional and psychological cost of so-called material progress was one of Butts's lifelong concerns.

The Great War resulted in the death of over ten million people and left in Britain what was insidiously called at the time the "surplus" two million women, and it also had, "as many writers testify, an incalculable effect on both the social and moral climate of the country."[3] However, it also accelerated technological advances in transport such as the aeroplane and the car. Responding to the delight she felt at rapid travel, Butts noted in her journal that her 1924 poem "Song to Keep People out of Dorset" (later called "Corfe") was "to be sung in a car when crossing that county."[4] While the outer world became smaller, so the inner world of each individual expanded as psychological concepts were disseminated. How to reflect in language the "cinematograph of the senses" and all these "new relations" was Butts's "gymnastic," the reason for her journal as she questioned her own and others' behaviour and subconscious (8 December 1919; 19 December 1929; 9 January 1920). In these pages she explored and questioned the ideas of Jung and Freud. If she preferred the former to the latter, it was not because she felt Freud was wrong, so much as only partly right: "A great peace tonight," she enthused on the 28 December 1929, adding: "(nor will I let Freud's perfectly sound mechanics explain it away. Explain its *way*, yes)." By 1933 Butts's disagreements with Freud led her to write: "I am old enough to remember what it was like when the theories of Freud first escaped from the study and the clinic, and the great game of Hunt-the-Complex began, to the entertainment and alarm of a war-shattered and disillusioned world."[5] Reading the journals one learns how and why she felt Freud was misguided.

The impact new theories had on the spiritual aspects of existence was of particular concern to Butts, and it is this concern that eventually led to her conversion to Anglo-Catholicism in her early forties. To explore these intangible areas she developed striking metaphors, such as "the knight's move," a term borrowed from chess to denote that "round-the-cornerness" of life; or the "string of beads" to evoke the veiled relationship between people and events that is usually glimpsed only in retrospect (28 July 1926; January 1927; 6 February 1932). "If it is true," she pondered on 3 August 1929, "that it is the simplicity of the Einsteinian formulae which constitutes their difficulty, that they are are so obvious as to escape notice, it seems to me that this applies to events in life, numberless happenings, perhaps the basic ones, which we, saturated in detail and hurrying through subdivisions, lose sight of."

Mary Franeis Butts was born in Poole, Dorset, England, on the 13 December 1890 into an upper-middle-class English family. Her great-grandfather Thomas Butts had been one of the patrons of the mystical poet and engraver William Blake, and a substantial number of Blake's works were housed in Salterns, Butts's family home. She had one brother, Anthony (Tony), ten years her junior. Butts was educated locally until her father's death in 1904. She then attended St. Leonard's School for Girls in St Andrew's, Scotland (1905–8). Butts was extremely close to her father, whose literary and artistic interests had made him friends with several of the Pre-Raphaelite artists, such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Her strained relationship with her mother (who married Frederick Colville-Hyde in 1907), was exacerbated by Mary Colville-Hyde's poor management of the Butts fortune and her limited interest in her daughter's writing.[6] Even though she was only fifteen at the time, Butts realised, as her mother never did, the mistake of selling in 1906 (for a relatively small amount of money to pay off death-duties) the Butts Blake collection—now in the Tate Gallery, London. On reaching twenty-one in 1911, Butts received a small annuity from her father's will. She could have lived fairly comfortably on this private income, but she was never adept at managing her own finances, being overly generous with money when she had it (she largely funded her husband John Rodker's Ovid Press) and borrowing heavily when she was without.

Butts attended Westfield College, London, as a General Student between 1909 and 1912 but left without completing her degree. She then studied for the equivalent of a modern Diploma in Social Work at the Lon-

don School of Economics. When the First World War broke out she was engaged in voluntary work on the Children's Care Committee in East London. During these years she seems to have had primarily lesbian relationships. A socialist and pacifist during the war—the period of her life when she was actively political—Butts became involved with the Jewish writer and publisher John Rodker and they married in May 1918. Their only child, Camilla, was born in November 1920, by which time the marriage was already foundering. They separated soon after and divorced in 1927.

Butts moved between England and France in the 1920s, spending lengthy periods in Paris, Villefranche (on the French Riviera), and London with a number of fellow artists. She had several passionate yet difficult relationships, with, amongst others, the Scottish writer and magical adept Cecil Maitland, the American composer Virgil Thomson, and the French writer Mireille Havet. In October 1930 she married the British painter Gabriel Atkin (also known as Aitken; Butts adopted the name Mary Aitken except in her writing, where she always retained the name Mary Butts). In 1932 they settled in Sennen Cove, Cornwall, the most westerly inhabited village in England. This second marriage effectively lasted until 1934, at which time Atkin left, and Butts lived alone until her sudden death on the 5 March 1937. She was only forty-six years old.

Critical acclaim for Butts's work has become widespread only in the last few years.[7] This deferred recognition can be explained in part by her early death just before the Second World War and the fact that her exuberant and often dramatic social life concealed her dedication to her writing. She was, as these journals reveal, a writer first, while everything and everyone came second to her art. Like so many of the established writers of the Modernist canon, she had major personal failings, but it would be a loss to our understanding of the literary history of Anglo-American writing if we allowed these to obscure the proper appreciation of her extraordinary and original contribution to literature.

Butts began writing early, publishing her first poem and essay in her mid-teens.[8] From her twenties onwards she wrote and published a substantial body of work that influenced her fellow Modernists, particularly the American poets Marianne Moore and H.D. Her work was published in most of the famous little magazines of the period, including *The Egoist*, *The Dial*, *The Little Review*, *Calendar,* and *the transatlantic review*. Her major works include three novels (*Ashe of Rings* [1925], *Armed with Madness* [1928], *Death of Felicity Taverner* [1932]), three collections of

stories (*Speed the Plough and Other Stories* [1923], *Several Occasions* [1932], *Last Stories* [1938]), two historical narratives (*The Macedonian* [1933], *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* [1935]), a partial autobiography (*The Crystal Cabinet* [1937]), an epistolary sequence (*Imaginary Letters* [1928], and two pamphlets (*Warning to Hikers* [1932], *Traps for Unbelievers* [1932]) as well a considerable number of poems, reviews, and articles.[9] Almost all her published work is now once again in print and is increasingly receiving its due recognition internationally. As part of the long-term project of making her unpublished writing available, an essay and two short stories by Butts have so far come out in American publications: "The Master's Last Dancing," in *The New Yorker*, "Bloomsbury," in *Modernism/Modernity,* and "Fumerie," in *Conjunctions*.[10] Butts's journal will fascinate established readers of her work as well as anyone interested in a writer's craft and experience of life in Europe between 1916 and 1937.

Entries on her work in most current literary biographical dictionaries, critical studies, and anthologies of Modernism illustrate the widespread recognition that Butts was "stylistically innovative."[11] Unlike Gertrude Stein, who ruthlessly broke up language patterns (in her journal Butts expresses a dislike of Stein and a limited admiration for her work), Butts's innovations were created in the service of story-telling. As part of their "profound interrogation of literature's representational function," the Modernists were famously urged by Ezra Pound to "Make it New," and Butts's style is certainly Modernist while remaining distinctive because of its particularly allusive and elusive mingling of the contemporary with the classical, the literary with the everyday, the expected with the unusual.[12] "I don't believe our life differs so much from that depicted as Russian. Our angle of approach is different, but the events & temperamental agonies are much the same. All these days could be written in the Russian mode," she wrote on the 5 January 1917 when considering Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* in relation to the psychological effects of living in wartime London under Zeppelin bombardment. "If a painting must not be literary, a writing must not be literary either," she decided on 7 December 1918, having talked to her friend the Bloomsbury painter and art critic Roger Fry. A year earlier she had agreed with Ford Madox Ford (then still Hueffer) that what was crucial in writing was "not to describe the great occasion in the grand manner but to make the crossing of the street equally significant," since, as Ford pointed out, "the world before the War is one thing and must be written about in one manner; the after-war world

is quite another and calls for quite different treatment" (December 1917/ January 1918).[13]

"A Fresh 'Spiritual' Adventure"

As with so many of her male contemporaries, Butts's touchstones were classical—yet her knowledge was a different kind from that of say Eliot, Pound, Sassoon, Aldington, Blunden, or Joyce—all of whom would have been taught the classics at school. Butts's classical education began very early, when as a young child her father told her Greek myths, which they acted out together. She later remembered how "the tang of his irony . . . the cycles of antique story-telling . . . pleased me as they please all children, the first pleasing that never wears out, only deepens and re-quickens, like resource to a well-spring, a hidden source of loveliness and power."[14] Throughout her life she composed classical stories, from "Bellerophon to Anteia" in 1921 to the innovative biographical accounts of Alexander the Great and Cleopatra in the 1930s, because history was not so much a subject to her as a physical reality. As Butts grew up in, and around the grounds of, her family home, Salterns, set in its twenty-one acres, she felt the presence of the land- and seascape of the county of Dorset, an ancient part of England with its stone-age barrows and pre-historic rings, in *classical* terms. In an unpublished 1909 poem, "To Drakonti," she described herself as "a Child come out of the sea. / But the wind is my friend, and the sky," and towards the end of her life she wrote of the house where she was born: "At Salterns, at the dawn of my life, Power and Loveliness walked naked over East Dorset, side by side. Lay down to sleep together like gods on Purbeck, rose out of the dawn-washed sea." From childhood she "could not think of" the Isle of Purbeck (which she could see from the house) "as anything else but a live thing . . . a true daimon, as the young of each race first see power. Something like the Greek stories my father gave me and sometimes told me, only not in a book." Salterns was a place where "the wind was different, and a goddess called Artemis . . . shot with the new moon."[15] Although she had been living in London for several years by the time the journal opens in July 1916, it is clear that she had gone there to have *classical* adventures: "I've left a place where the trees toss/ to look for Gods at Charing Cross."[16] Yet always, whenever she was too long in a city, be it to experience the London Adventure or "Paris poetry" (June 1929), she expressed her desire to be in a coastal landscape: "I want the sea, the sea,"

she cried on 30 July 1916, echoing Xenophon, and in Paris on 14 December 1929 she had a dream about being in Dorset, which "made me ache for spring in my own country." Little wonder she wrote to the American writer Glenway Wescott in 1923 of Salterns and its environs: "It's my native place and I worship it."[17] Indeed Salterns remains central to her consciousness, embodying and invoking in Butts's mind "the old, hardy, fragrant rural world" of "Dorset, the county where, if anywhere, the secret of England is implicit, concealed, yet continually giving out the stored forces of its genius."[18]

When she visited Corsica with the British painter Francis Rose in April 1928 it was this deep-felt love for landscape that led her to exclaim: "The country is a mountain range rising out of the sea, coloured bright blue. I never saw a bluer world. Clean, airy, untouched, blue hills out of the blue Mediterranean. All the blues. The Gods keep it so. . . . A place which if you were born in you would love above human beings." It is no surprise that Butts's "totemic, magical and symbolic" places are those which echo the imaginative power of Saltern's Dorset coastscape, such as Villefranche in the French Riviera, St. Malo, an ancient port in Brittany, and Sennen Cove, Cornwall, where she is buried.[19]

Her classical allusiveness, therefore, is embedded in the landscape; the two were inextricably linked for her. Other writers, such as H.D. and the British writers Bryher (Winifred Ellerman) and Dorothy Richardson, wrote of the Hellenic qualities and resonances of Cornwall, yet for Butts it was almost a physical, intuitive association. She lived there because that landscape embodied the qualities of Dorset just as much as Hellas: "*Remember* looking up the hill from [behind her bungalow in Sennen Cove]. The burning white light and blue shadows on the cliff grass and shrub and rock . . . that memory. At Salterns the ivy-strangled pine" (19 August 1932). Or again: "'Mediterranean' day: crystal cold morning, *warm* moon night—cloud veils and fireworks. Out in the dark, in all loveliness—making me remember Salterns and when I was a child" (5 November 1932).

She was delighted when the British writer E. M. Forster praised her life of Alexander the Great, *The Macedonian* (1933), and certainly when writing she concurred with his dictum to "only connect" the various elements of life.[20] However, in another mood she might well have agreed with D. H. Lawrence's dissatisfaction with Forster's relegation of landscape to mere backdrop: "E. M. does see people, people and nothing but people: *ad nauseam*," groaned Lawrence on reading *A Passage to India*.[21] For both Butts and Lawrence the landscape and its relationship with its

inhabitants were central. As she remarked in October 1921: "Nature has a counterpart, a representation of every interior mood and obscure perception of man." This belief may well explain the resonant power of the numerous descriptions of her surroundings, which are so distinctive a feature of Butts's journal: "Today it was the Aphrodite Sea. Almost Botticelli's, but too high, for it's winter. The cliffs in the gold dawn, pure Mediterranean, siren water" (9 February 1932). And: "*Remember:* Rainbow-hair on the wave-crests running in—shocks and shocks of iris-drift" (11 September 1935). Oddly, Butts makes little mention of Lawrence's writing. Certainly H.D. noticed a similar quality in their work, writing to Bryher in 1935: "I miss something now of the American timbre in almost all English writing—not . . . Butts, that is some sort of almost Druidic thing, Lawrence also had it—but much over-grown with other weeds—I mean weeds, the Druidic is fine psychic flower and eternal."[22]

As well as the landscape to explore there were books to read and reread. The classicist J. E. Harrison's *Prolegomena to the Study of the Greek Religion* (1903) and *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (1912) were central texts for Mary Butts. She read them when they were first published and returned to them repeatedly throughout her life, and always with more understanding. When she needed consolation after the arrest of her then-lover, the poet John Rodker, for evasion of conscription as a Conscientious Objector, Butts's reference points were wholly classical: "Began Eros poem. I want the *Prolegomena* again, and *Themis*. One's lovers die and there remain certain immortal words . . . I want all things Greek again" (6 April 1917). This was because, as she explained two years later, "to remember Greek life is not to adventure a delicious ideal, but to go home" (22 December 1919). She often referred to having a Daimon—a spiritual force guiding her which she obeyed, just as Lawrence, Yeats and, long before them, Socrates obeyed theirs.[23]

In her twenties Butts began to study occultism and was initiated into several magical practices by magicians such as Philip Heseltine (aka Peter Warlock) and Aleister Crowley in order to enter and understand the "fourth dimension" and hence evoke it in her work.[24] Her gradual dissatisfaction with these magical experiments came from their disregard for the material world. She declared on the 28 February 1920: "The danger of 'magic' and its enquiry is that it may diminish, 'despiritualise' the 'material' world. . . . art, love, scholarship, dancing, tobacco, we will throw away our tools, and concentrate on this direct enquiry. Nothing will take away from me the sense of the terrific and absolute importance of phe-

nomena." Nevertheless, throughout her adult life she attempted to define and describe what she called "this mysticism of mine" by engaging in automatic writing, seances, and astral journeys in order to tap this fourth dimension, with varying success (29 March 1927). Yet the always-rejuvenating and illuminating journey was the imagined one she made to the Hellenic world, returning with truths she felt were applicable to Modernity: [25]

> These books on occultism with their bastard words, credulities, falsities on facts, emotion and aesthetic falsities, inwardly revolt me. The symbols save when they were purely numeral and abstract, seemed but poor correspondences. Then I came back on a sudden turn. I remembered the *Prolegomena* and the others, the profoundest study of my adolescence—mystery cults from Thrace to Eleusis. I remembered *The Bacchae*. There are my formulae, there my words of power. . . . I am rereading the *Prolegomena* . . . There I know I shall find the way. . . . here is the Hellenic grace. A vast tranquillity and assurance have come out of this. (21 April 1920)

After all, "Isn't one page of [Yeats'] *Per Amica* worth every *Equinox* [Crowley's occult journal]?" she asked rhetorically in April 1921, deciding a few months later that "I'd sooner be the writer I am capable of becoming than an illuminated adept [or] magician." Those contemporaries who thought her another Mrs. Blavatsky were wrong to do so; according to Butts, magic "will have its place in art (it always had its place in art). Art is it, presented by the oblique approach. The direct—is not my business" (15 August 1921). [26]

Gender, Feminism and the Classics

I can't hem a handkerchief neatly, but I can write.
[June 1920]

A feminist all her life, Butts was repeatedly appalled at the sexism she encountered: "In my relations with men I shall meet this continually, that though they admire, though they are sexually attracted they do not want my extreme vitality." The bald truth is that the generalised attitudes she cites—"Men do not like clever women" and "Why don't you settle down?"—are still common in the twenty-first century. When exhausted

from pregnancy, Butts understood why, historically, women have had to play the "old game" (16 September 1918): "How women with childbearing always in their mind had at whatever cost to have their men, by fraud, force, cajolery, anyhow to protect them, feed and provide for them while they were with young. This instinct explains so much of the worst things we do" (16 June 1920). "Creation is what matters" to Mary Butts but it had "to be out of my mind. If my men were to acknowledge that—I could throw in a baby or so. I want a child. . . . [However,] girl children & mothers are to have more in their life than reproduce themselves & be nice to their men" (15, 28 December 1919).

This is why, when she read her friend Wilma Meikle's 1916 polemic *Towards a Sane Feminism,* Butts remarked that it "renews one's courage more than wine" (22 November 1916). Especially when Meikle declares that "the rapidity with which modern civilisation is evolved makes the reformation of the domestic relations of women, of their relation to their husbands and their relation to their children and their work, more urgently necessary."[27] The extended opportunities to explore female friendship was one of the positive by-products of war as social restrictions on women were relaxed: "The wartime . . . girl is to be seen any night dining out alone or with a friend in the moderate-priced restaurants in London. Formerly she would never have had her evening meal in town unless in the company of a man friend."[28] Butts's war entries show that she and her friends made full use of this greater social freedom. Yet three months before her death she was still lamenting "the false value & idea of chastity taught me. Taught that it increased my market value when my desire was to be valued for myself, for what I was & could do, not as intacta puella." To read the journal and consider her formidable list of publications is to be impressed by her achievement; clearly Butts felt that this was far short of her potential.

Much important work has been done on the relationship between gender and the classics.[29] The critic Shari Benstock wrote in *Women of the Left Bank: Paris 1900–1940* that for women writers of Butts's generation their relationship with classical literature in comparison with that of their male contemporaries was, on the whole, nonexistent: "Need it be noted that the knowledge of Latin and Greek was not to be taken for granted among women educated in these years? H.D., Natalie Barney and Renée Vivien learned Greek on their own in order to read the fragments of Sappho that became available in the 1890s, and the one woman Modernist whose writing consistently turns on classical sources of English words is

Djuna Barnes, who received no formal education at all and who learned etymology by reading *The New English Dictionary*."[30]

Our understanding of the intricate literary history of Modernism has increased since this comment was made in 1986; despite Butts's prominent presence on the Left Bank in the 1920s and the centrality of classical metaphor to her writing, Benstock omits Butts from her otherwise excellent account. More recent books, such as Raitt and Tate's collection of essays, *Women's Fiction and the Great War* (1997), Cheyette and Marcus' *Modernity, Culture and "the Jew"* (1998), and Cardinal et al.'s *Women's Writing on the First World War* (1999) all discuss Butts.[31] In her *Gendering Classicism* (1997) Ruth Hoberman particularly appreciates the ways in which Butts and Naomi Mitchison (whose work Butts admired and reviewed in 1930) "don't just embrace myths; they juxtapose it with alternative ways of understanding the past."[32]

Yet on the whole Benstock was correct. Though some women were well educated at school, they were a very small minority.[33] Butts was unusual because her exposure to the classics from her father's story-telling did not end with his death. She was fortunate in attending St Leonard's School, as it was "one of the few schools which at that time gave a girl the same education as a boy."[34] And of Westfield College, Butts later wrote that its significance lay not in *what* it taught her, but that "there I learned . . . *how* to learn, I do not doubt."[35]

Thus she had a qualitatively different relationship with, and understanding of, classical literature than, say, Bryher, who gained the confidence to write from reading one of Butts's stories, or H.D., whose admiration for Butts's writing has not to date been sufficiently recognised. On reading *The Macedonian* when it was published in the spring of 1933 H.D. declared to Bryher: "I have finished Mary's book and do think it a tour de force, but I have always been a Butts fan. . . . It would make an excellent ballet or play or movie . . . yes, Butts is to be congratulated . . . It really is living and she has some nice magic touches, quite hair-raising. Splendid approach . . . and economy."[36] Any personal differences notwithstanding, these three women shared an unshakable belief in the importance of literature, especially classical literature. On 11 October 1918 H.D. wrote to Bryher, whom she then hardly knew, about the need to revive interest in the classics when the war was over.[37] Only a few months later Butts was writing in *her* journal just how crucial the classical world was to her identity as a writer. It was an identity that lay beyond her gender, predating it: "Only in Homer have I found impersonal consolation—a life where I am

unsexed or bisexed, or completely myself—or a mere pair of ears" (3 January 1919).[38] Whether Butts expressed passion for a man or a woman during her life it was almost always filtered through a classical consciousness. In August 1916 she and Rodker stood under the stars in wartime England and when he referred to "Psyche looking for Cupid," she rejoined: "this Psyche has found her Cupid." Certainly her conception of beauty is that of classical antiquity: her friend the British painter Nina Hamnett she found beautiful because she was "pure greek" (19 November 1917); and she was always attracted to classical male beauty, such as that embodied by the French writer Jean Cocteau, the Russian interior designer Sergei Maslenikof, and the British artist Gabriel Atkin (her second husband) with his "star-distilled eyes [and] pure skin" (9 October 1933).[39]

Butts's journal began towards the end of what she described as her sapphic life, the intense physical and emotional relationships she had with several women during the 1910s and which culminated from 1914 onwards in the tempestuous passion of Eleanor Rogers. While she wrote a number of Sapphic poems in the 1910s (some using the pseudonym Mark Bacon Drury), Butts was well aware that when "seized with memories of past ecstacies transcended [with Eleanor], there will have to be a *secret* manuscript seeing that no one can write openly about these things" (3 September 1916; my emphasis). Only the previous year Lawrence's *The Rainbow* had been banned under the 1857 Obscene Publications Act, an Act used with increasing force during the Great War. Nor was Butts's Sapphic manuscript hypothetical; quite the reverse. It would be 1929 before Virginia Woolf famously declared, "If Chloe likes Olivia and Mary Carmichael knows how to express it, she will light a torch in that vast chamber where nobody has yet been."[40] By July 1916, when her journal opens, however, the very real Mary Butts rather than the fictional Mary Carmichael had already completed a novel "Dangerous" (then called "Unborn Gods"), which presents the ideals of a pacifist Sapphic passion as the alternative to "those besetting lusts and agonies by which nations fall," epitomised by the sex-war.[41] Although Butts could never find a publisher for the manuscript, the novel will finally be printed in 2003 by Trent Editions.[42]

Written during the first half of the Great War (and hence unfortunately prior to Butts's journal), the contemporary setting and context of "Dangerous"—primarily in war-ravaged London—is informed by Butts's own political engagement in the capital. During the war Butts continued her voluntary social work for one of the London City Council's Chil-

dren's Care Committees in Hackney, central London (where she later met the Australian painter Stella Bowen). She also worked for the National Council for Civil Liberties.

A number of organisations were formed to protect individual rights early on in the war, such as the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF), set up in November 1914 for young men of military age. Alongside the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) and the National Council Against Conscription (NCAC), the NCF argued against the introduction of conscription. When conscription was nevertheless introduced in February 1916 (universal conscription began in May 1916), the role of the NCAC was to support and protect those not wishing to fight. In July 1916 it was renamed the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), as from this point on in the war, "a new term (usually of abuse), 'Conscientious Objector' had entered the English language."[43]

Much work has now been done on the dangers faced by Conscientious Objectors (COs, known familiarly as "conchies"), a term derived from "the appeals based on a conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant service" at tribunals set up throughout Britain in 1916.[44] As part of her work for the NCCL, Butts attended a number of these Military Service Tribunals and thus was well aware of the social, political, and psychological effects on COs, especially since her lover John Rodker was already in hiding from the authorities to avoid conscription when she began her journal.[45] The unsettled and self-questioning nature of Butts's journal entries graphically illustrates Gilbert and Gubar's claim that "far from being behind the lines, modern women of letters found themselves situated on an embattled and often confusing cultural front."[46]

Indeed, her novel "Dangerous" anticipates many of the postwar debates through its overt criticism of the unequal employment rights of men and women (it was only after the war ended in 1919 that the Sex Disqualification [Removal] Act would be passed) and its open reference to contraception, venereal disease, abortion, and various extramarital sexual practices. In the 1930s the British writer Vera Brittain claimed that she was typical of her generation in knowing nothing at the beginning of the Great War about the precise nature of the sexual act, let alone homosexuality, sodomy, or venereal disease.[47] Butts was already writing about such matters twenty years earlier.

There are oblique references in the journal to Butts's unsuccessful attempts to have "Dangerous" published. Although she acquired an agent who sent it to several publishers, it is hardly surprising that it has never

appeared. In addition to the Obscene Publications Act there was also the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) of 1914, which "was used to suppress anything that deviated from the views presented in wartime propaganda."[48] In accordance with Section 42 of DORA, the penalties were severe, including six months' hard labour, forfeiture of the printer's machinery, and, if the case was heard by court martial, possible life imprisonment. This novel, completed when Butts was only twenty-five, reveals a very different kind of writing from the highly experimental Modernism with which she is now associated. Her use of classical metaphor and literary quotations, in particular from Swinburne— the whole narrative revolves around his poem "Dolores" (1866)—shows Butts beginning to find her own voice. Highly political, socially concerned, and above all overtly feminist, "Dangerous" places Butts alongside George Gissing, Edith Wharton, Gilbert Cannan, and May Sinclair as a Modern writer.[49] However, what it shares with all of Butts's later narratives is her refusal to write "family plot novels."[50]

The Novels

In October 1916, four months after she had completed "Dangerous" and two months after she began her journal, when her love affair with Eleanor Rogers was disintegrating and that with John Rodker was developing, Butts conceived *Ashe of Rings*. From that moment on, no doubt dismayed at the impossibility of anything but a secret manuscript about sapphic truths, she moved beyond the depiction of the modern world to the highly stylised realm of Modernism, with its "movement away from the authority and coherence of narrative commentary to decentred narrative; . . . an emphasis on the fluidity and discontinuity of identity, often expressed through the 'stream of consciousness'; disruptions of chronology; and a vigorous engagement of the reader in the difficulties of interpretation."[51] "What can I say [about it]?" she asked herself in January 1933 when drafting the afterword to the first British edition of *Ashe of Rings*. The answer lies in the madness of the Great War and an alignment with experimental Modernism: "life got like that at the end of the War (has perhaps been like that ever since only we're more or less used to it). . . . Anything about style? The truth is that I was tight on Joyce at the time, as we all were; & that now having found how to reproduce half-conscious thinking, most of the fun has gone out of it."[52]

Ashe of Rings (1925) opens with the following dramatic metaphor:

"Rings lay in a cup of turf. A thin spring sun shone on its stones. Two rollers of chalk down hung over it; midway between their crest and the sea, the house crouched like a dragon on a saucer of jade."[53]

Like most of Butts's narratives, *Ashe of Rings* is allegorical, a battle between those who understand the significance of the age-old landscape of the Ashe family and who thus see themselves as the Eumoldipae (inheritors of the Eleusinian Mysteries), and the forces that are antagonistic to it. These forces are portrayed through "masks" (in the Greek sense of the word) of the other characters. Anthony Ashe and, on his death, his daughter Elizabeth Vanna, become guardians of the Rings. The indifference of Ashe's wife, Melitta, to their power is such that she defiles them by having sex with her lover on the Rings. Vanna's friend, Judy Marston, personifies the destructiveness of the Great War, which overshadows the whole novel. There is also Serge Fyodorovitch, the Russian artist who, whilst he tries to understand the significance of the Rings, cannot see beyond their surface appearance of "wet grass and high trees . . . a cold place where he chewed on wet leaves and lay on stone."[54]

In First-World-War London Serge and Judy are locked in a mutually destructive sexual combat. When their relationship breaks down temporarily, Vanna rescues Serge from his near-starvation and encourages him to resume his painting, taking him away to the countryside of her birthplace. There is no possibility for a passionate relationship between them as Vanna is preoccupied with regaining possession of Rings, from which she has been disinherited by the birth of her brother, born of the relationship between her mother (Melitta) and Melitta's lover. Meanwhile the war in the form of Judy follows them to the Rings as Judy becomes involved with Peter Amburton, Vanna's neighbour, who has been discharged from the war because of shellshock. As a result of her misplaced sexual jealousy of Serge and Vanna, Judy persuades Peter that he must rape Vanna on the Rings at night. Like the Lady in Milton's poem *Comus*, the virginal Vanna thwarts this plan by the force of her chastity. She lies naked on one of the stones and Peter, terrified by the sight of her, runs away. In this way Vanna atones for her mother's earlier defilement of the Rings, and the novel ends with a reconciliation between mother and daughter, which re-establishes Vanna in her rightful place as the guardian of Rings.

Reflecting on the novel in 1933, Butts called it a "War-Fairy-Tale" because of its happy ending.[55] This allegory, which draws its imagery from a medley of literary texts from the classics to Frazer's anthropological

study, *The Golden Bough*, presents a pervasive and persuasive message that points to the power of the land—when it is properly tended and respected by its inhabitants—to heal rifts and foster creativity.

Yet for all its highly Modernist experimentation, *Ashe of Rings*, like all of Butts's writing, is firmly grounded in a real place: the Rings of the title are recognisably the prehistoric Badbury Rings of her native Dorset (depicted in Atkin's striking dust jacket). Visiting them in March 1922 Butts reflected how she "lay stretched out on the ground and understood that the Rings' signature is written in the quiet." This is no Joycean signature, rather: "This place is enchanted—technically—concretely—if there is such a thing—by reputation, by experience, by tradition. I have felt them—but have never seen anything but trees and grass and wind and their accompaniments. . . . Obliquely I retold what I had seen in *Ashe* but the communication and translation are oblique. They have affected my mind and because my mind is that sort of mind—they have made an aesthetic restatement."

In a fictional journal entry for 16 July 1929 the British writer Cyril Connolly describes how despite himself he is won over by the power of the Dorset coastscape and finds himself joining in with the traditional country dancing, which in deference to technological developments has advanced to "danc[ing]on the grass to a gramophone."[56] Perhaps Connolly had read Butts's second published novel *Armed with Madness* (1928), for there Butts brilliantly transforms and heightens social custom by bringing the landscape to centre-stage. In her fictionalised Dorset it is:

> Marvellously noisy, but the noises let through silence. . . . the silence let through by jays, the haycutter, and the breeze, was a complicated production of stone rooms, the natural silence of empty grass, and the equivocal personal silence of the wood. Not many nerves could stand it. People who had come for a week had been known to leave next day. The people who had the house were interested in the wood and its silence. . . . A large gramophone stood with its mouth open on the verandah flags. They had been playing to the wood after lunch, to appease it and to keep their dancing in hand. The house was empty. . . . The wood had it all its own way. They were out.[57]

The most overtly experimental of her novels, *Armed with Madness*, was reprinted in the British Penguin Modern Classics series last year.[58] Il-

lustrated with drawings by the French artist Jean Cocteau, this Modernist rewriting of the Grail myth set in England in the Long Weekend, first introduces us to five English people: Scylla and her younger brother Felix and their friends Ross, Picus, and Picus's lover Clarence. The arrival of an American guest, Dudley Carston, whom they met in France, coincides with the discovery in Picus's and Clarence's well (now unusable because stagnant) of a cup that might be the chalice of the Holy Grail. This sets off a modern-day Quest where, as in its medieval forerunners, there are elements of chaos and dispersal, enmeshed here with the more contemporary Freudian and Jungian ideas that are commented on by the characters. The entire literary fabric is beautifully shot through with snatches of song lyrics and quotations. Characteristically Modernist in its lack of resolution, the narrative ends when the American departs on another "folk-adventure," while a Russian emigré, Boris Polteratsky (the subject of Butts's *Imaginary Letters* published later in 1928) arrives. As the opening quoted above reveals, in *Armed with Madness* as in *Ashe of Rings* before it, it is the land which frames Butts's narrative, opening and closing it.

The same is true of her third novel, *Death of Felicity Taverner* (1932), which begins:

> A young man who had arrived uninvited from France lay under the green slate roof of the verandah, perfecting the idea he had suggested to his hosts that, if he had not come, they would have sent for him. He had not had to walk the ten miles from Starn to their remote house above the sea. . . . built under a green down, set with its lawn deep in the base of a triangular wood, stream-bisected, which ran down to a blunt nose of cliff and a ledge of rock to the sea.[59]

The eponymous Felicity Taverner has died in a car crash in France, and her friends and cousins are mourning her death. The loss to her relatives, to Scylla, to Scylla's husband, Picus, and to Felicity's brother Adrian, is not just a personal one, for Felicity is a kind of Fisher Queen—and with her death comes a more insidious threat to the land itself. It is no coincidence that Felicity's very name means happiness. Felicity's relatives, with the help of Boris Polteratsky, an exiled Russian aristocrat (and friend of Felicity in France), attempt to find out the cause of her death, for which they feel that Felicity's husband, a Russian half-Jew called Kralin, is in some way responsible. As in all Butts's fictions the characters who un-

derstand the importance of tending and appreciating the land work with it to protect it. Nowhere is this more evident than in *Death of Felicity Taverner,* where it emerges that Kralin is determined to buy up the neighbouring coastscape, even resorting to blackmail—if her relatives refuse to sell him Felicity's house he threatens to publish Felicity's most intimate papers as material for psychological research. His intention—and Butts is extraordinarily prescient here—is to convert it to a pleasure park.

Death of Felicity Taverner is written in the genre of a detective story—Butts was always an avid read of "'tec" novels. Unbeknown to the Taverners, Kralin's plan is foiled by Boris, who persuades Kralin to enter a cave after pointing out its advantages as a curiosity for daytrippers. There Boris kills him and leaves the cave to fill up with the tide. Once again Butts has created a fairy-tale ending to this ecological allegory—in the sense that destruction is averted—although she is not seriously suggesting that developers be murdered and their bodies left to be destroyed by the elements. Rather she seems to imply that it is only a matter of time before the landscape is changed irrevocably . . . a situation that now faces us.

Recent criticism of *Death of Felicity Taverner*, the most accessible of her novels, while praising its literary power, has also led to the misconceived accusation of Butts as anti-Semitic.[60] It would be more accurate to say, in Laurence Rainey's phrase, that the novel shows "a probing exploration of anti-Semitism."[61] This is true also of her journal. During the Great War Butts certainly noted: "But I understand anti-Semitism." Reading the entire passage in which the comment appears illustrates just how misleading it is to quote out of context:

> I have seen him again, not a lover, but a race, a people. They come from Asia, creeping across the world into Europe, long tentative fingers. They banked up against our castle walls like the waters before a dam. Now they run free and the blood of our noblest is mixed with theirs. Before them our forms of civilisation may not perish, but may be terribly assimilated. They are right. Where they breed, we decay.
>
> It is rather pitiful to me—they do not love soil or care how things should grow—sentiment is outraged, & the rising sap in my body.
>
> But I understand anti-Semitism.
>
> We are above our races—we crystallise and I say that man's will can prevail over chaos, & he that any such hope is vain delu-

> sion. But where the East & the West have met we have Egypt & Babylon & Greece. "I will think upon Rahab & Babylon, [. . .] Tyre & the Morians [Ethiopia] Also, lo! There was he born . . ." [Psalm 87—in praise of Zion]. [(19 November 1917)]

Butts often used her journal to debate questions. What is clear about this particular passage is that it *is* a debate. There are unknowable aspects, such as whether the man participating in the debate is her lover Rodker (Jewish) or—more likely—Edwin Greenwood; who the "they" are in "They are right." It is unclear whether she is repeating the commonly held narrative about the Jews, that is, whether the unpleasant metaphors of "long fingers," "creeping," etc., are her choice or the popular one. The "sentiment" that is "outraged" by such views, on the other hand, is surely Butts's. That anti-Jewish comments are pervasive in the idiom of this historical period has been well documented (Virginia Woolf herself made many such remarks). But there is a huge difference between intellectually "understand[ing]" and *condoning* anti-Semitism. That Butts did not share this prejudice is clear from the final paragraph of the extract, beginning with her belief that: "we are above our races." She acknowledges that the civilisations derived from the meeting of East and West, most notably Ancient Greece, are those that have done most to form and inspire her own mind. Half a year later she married Rodker, and he was only one of the Jewish writers and artists whom she respected in later years, for example the artist Max Jacob and the writers Lion Feuchtwanger and Oswell Blakeston.

In 1936 she noted her horror and fury when, during a discussion about fascism and communism, her friend the Scottish writer Angus Davidson "riled me [by] calling me 'anti-Semite,' when I hate cruelty as much as he, & only want—not to repeat pious platitudes about how wicked it all is, patting myself on the back for being English—but want to understand *how* & *why* it all happens; why people like ourselves can concur at least in things, actions, which make him & me sick" (14 November 1936). Davidson's criticism of Butts must have made her particularly angry given her letter to him two years earlier, after Hitler had become chancellor of Germany, explaining that she and Atkin had agreed to befriend a Jewish refugee, who was living in Sennen, from the Nazis.[62] In her autobiography, *The Crystal Cabinet*, finished shortly before her death, she stated her position publicly when commenting "how easily, as in Nazi Germany, the liberties we now take for granted may be lost."[63]

Sensitivity to historical context is crucial, especially given the fact that Butts died in March 1937, that is, over two years *before* the Second World War and the full horrors of the Holocaust.

The question in 1932 whether she had based the villain of *Death of Felicity Taverner*, the half-Jewish Kralin, on her then ex-husband Rodker drew a firm denial from her.[64] Indeed Rodker himself was not remotely worried, clearly ready to recognise Butts's intention: "I wish I'd read your book [*Death of Felicity Taverner*], but I haven't, so I can't really feel involved with your Kralin. But when I do read it, I imagine my main interest will be how *you* have felt your character, the way your character is drawn: the things he *is* or *does* will seem less important to me."[65] Kralin owes no allegiance to the land or to tradition. The fact that he is half-Jewish is not coincidental to this rootlessness—he "do[es] not love soil or love how things should grow" (17 November 1917)—but neither is it, by any means, essential to it. Kralin epitomises a combination of the modern condition of unbelief, hubris (as explained by Gilbert Murray), and capitalist greed.[66] This is what makes him the villain for, as she wrote in *The Crystal Cabinet*, the strength of the real Dorset landscape was what "grounded" Butts all her life: "Without the Rings I know what would have happened to me—whirled away in the merry-go-round of the complex and the wish-fulfilment and the conditioned reflex, with Jung and Pavlov, Julian Huxley and Bertrand Russell, in group-consciousness of the post-war young. On those rocking-horses I might have pranced for ever, with the rest of us, at our version of Vanity Fair."[67]

From Life to Art

Who will give us a graph of life in its sequences?
9 May 1928

What is quickly and consistently apparent from Butts's journals is that far from compartmentalising her life and her writing, she subordinated the former to the latter. While there are many fascinating references to daily life, in her late twenties Butts described herself as "the man who not only looks into but lives in the timeless world" (30 April 1920). In addition to revealing the extent to which Butts (again like Woolf) wrote in the male idiom of her time, this quotation points to her understanding of the word "timeless"—a central term for herself and Modernists generally. According to a recent critic, "History itself is anathema to modernism. Mod-

ernism's twin opposing temporal categories are the moment and eternity, permutated in strange combinations throughout the texts."[68] Certainly Butts wrote in June 1928 of wanting to convey "time dipped in eternity"—however it is not so much a question of evoking contrasting oppositions, as the immanence of the past within the present; the present not as distinct from the past but as a palimpsest letting it seep through—an archaeological or geological literature. Nor is it merely the temporal, historical dimension she was concerned with. Along with Aldous Huxley, whose work she admired and wrote about, her notion of timelessness involved exploring, conveying, and to some extent fracturing, the boundaries between Time and Space, just as they were being redefined by the physicists, mathematicians, and philosophers around her.[69] Struck by the British writer E. F. Benson's comment, "Eternity isn't a quantity, it's a quality," Butts wrote in her journal: "It is this splitting up of events into an irregular, inconvenient, positively demented time sequence that bitches things up. Why can't relative things happen together, simultaneously or in close sequence? Instead we live like jugglers, keeping a dozen balls in the air" (14 January 1927).[70] The very latest idea and the oldest—Butts was continually trying to understand what she called "the machinery of life" (summer 1925). Hence her love of classical mythology and the Grail story, where the concept of the original, definitive version is inappropriate. In 1920 she listed texts which evoke the fourth or "x" dimension. In February 1925 she wrote how

> Five years ago I first became anxious to make a study of phenomena I felt were not explicable by understood physical laws—I date this conscious wish from my first acquaintance with Cecil Maitland though previously I had studied 'occultism' & found it stirring, but unsatisfactory, a maze of blind alleys. . . . After five years . . . I realise that I have observed all my life, a series of phenomena . . . which I now believe to be part of a series though the connection between them is not clear. They are inconclusive as yet, only observations & the observations may be incorrectly given but it is impossible to realise them without emotion for I know now that they are the cardinal events of my life.
>
> The stage I have arrived at is to connect these events with each other & to arrive at a theory for them. . . . Relate these, & describe the relation & the result will be an account of another order of life, an extension, not contradiction of this.

To arrive at a theory she made notes on anthologies of supernatural texts. In 1935 she sent out questionnaires to writers asking them if they had ever had a supernatural experience—the results were to be published in an anthology by Methuen, edited by herself and Algernon Blackwood.[71] In her personal life she sought out people who inspired her in her understanding of the machinery of life, where she herself and her emotions were part of the experiment. She admired Yeats because he, like her, was seeking out the "divine life" in "our outer life."[72] Hence the importance of her lover Cecil Maitland—whom, as quoted above, she associated with a "*conscious* wish" to understand the "cardinal events" of her life. In March 1921 she realised that she was about to live "the best part of my life" because Maitland was the "midwife" to her creativity. Similarly, in March 1933, she noted with gratitude that her Sennen neighbour, the British writer Ruth Manning-Sanders, was the "accoucheuse" (midwife) to her understanding and subsequent writing of *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* (1935). Her friend Sergey Maslenikof was worth all the emotional and financial trouble he caused her because he was "propitious for poetry" (4 March 1930). In *Imaginary Letters* the narrator declares that Boris Polteratsky (inspired by Sergey) has qualities that are "twisted on a string of poetry, the only string that is never broken," and whose existence provides a wonderful night's sleep for the narrator: "I slept, in a dark full of gold sparks glancing, memory of . . . [Boris], memory of a presence, but even more of a state of the imagination whose reality is only found *east of the sun, west of the moon*."[73] Similarly Butts married Gabriel Atkin because at his best he provided her with the "princely gift" (14 January 1930) of inspiring her writing and therefore being "someone for whom I must do my best work" (21 December 1929). Atkin's sensitive gracefulness, captured in the following anecdote by the British writer Sewell Stokes (Atkin's lover in the mid-1920s), illustrates why Butts loved him. In 1927, a few months before her accidental death, the American dancer Isadora Duncan (who with her "Homeric beauty" had revolutionised modern dance) performed for Atkin and Stokes in her private studio in Nice:

> For some moments after her dance in the studio was finished, Isadora remained standing. She was as motionless as a statue, except that tears glistened in her staring eyes, and one rolled slowly down her cheek. We all sat watching her as if some hypnotic influence had drawn our eyes to the white column of her body;

> then, without any warning G— did something which, though it sounds incredible, was not more theatrical than the rest of the evening had been. His action was spontaneous and simple. He got up from his seat, went over to her, and kneeling, bent his head to kiss the hem of the sheet she had thrown round herself. His adoration of her art was unmistakable. It shone in his eyes as he looked up at her. We all adored her, and felt grateful for what we had seen, but only G— seemed able to express that gratitude.[74]

Just such adoration is conveyed in Atkin's witty transformation of the Annunciation in his 1932 Christmas card, where he is depicted gazing with admiration at Mary Butts. The magical quality of her relationships with Maitland, Maslenikof, and Atkin led her to describe each one as belonging to her "fairy tale" life (10 October 1921; January 1927; 6 December 1929; 1 May 1930). Her "way" was to place creativity before personal happiness:

> There is always a time when one's friends are good, better than [they] themselves "see"; are, I like to think, more their real selves. I bank on that. They won't be able to keep it up, but I'd sooner remember them for that. It leads one into no worse trouble than this unfriendly, suspicious disillusion that is so popular. It takes some time to find out that they won't keep it up. And then one has to remember that with luck it will return; & anyhow it is my way. (June 1925)

So of course she was delighted to meet Jean Cocteau a few months later and hear him say "that some people had real fairy-tales in their lives, friendships & things like that; but that they had to pay for them" (March 1926). The cost was great, however; a month later she was asking herself: "No one to tell anything to. Have I even to give that up to be an 'artist'?" (April 1926). And two years later: "Is it the truth about people like me, that we can always have the stars to play with; it's the imitations we love and can't get?" (10 May 1928).

Mary Butts tried repeatedly to make life live up to poetry, and if she was only successful for short periods, her gift for seeing and encouraging the talent in others without doubt enhanced the lives of those she cared about. Those who benefitted and whose presence is documented in the journal include John Rodker and Gabriel Atkin, the British painters Francis Rose, Arthur Lett-Haines, Nina Hamnett, Cedric Morris; the Ameri-

can composer Virgil Thomson; the British writers Ethel Colburn Mayne, Hugh Ross Williamson, Angus Davidson; the American writers Marianne Moore, H.D., Glenway Wescott, Harcourt Wesson Bull; the French writers Jean Cocteau and Mireille Havet.

Transatlantic Relations

One thinks of America as a large, dark plain across a stream with a very few glow-worms about on it, and you carry the largest lamp.
Butts to Wescott, 1924[75]

The writer Glenway Wescott and the book producer Monroe Wheeler met and became lovers in 1919. Their lifelong complex association has been beautifully documented through their triangular relationship with the photographer George Platt Lynes in *When We Were Three* (1998). In this book Anatole Pohorilenko claims that, without this love affair, "the history of American literature and of museum and photographic arts would have been somewhat different today." Of Wescott he adds: "Vaguely remembered today as an expatriate writer . . . whose literary and social activity placed him in Paris, the French Riviera and New York between the great wars[, t]o those familiar with his work, he is known as one of the major novelists of his generation."[76] While Butts does not mention Lynes in her journal, she clearly knew him, since he took several of the photos of her that she had in her album. The unpublished correspondence of Wheeler and Wescott in the Beinecke, together with their journal entries, provide an unusual and powerful account of an almost seventy-year relationship between two acutely sensitive human beings, since Wescott retained (almost obsessively) all letters and documents in order, as he put it, to "keep track of myself."[77]

In 1923 Wescott was in London and it was there on the 18 March at a party given for Zena Naylor, Tony Butts's then-lover, that he first met the "most exquisite . . . Mary Butts, in a great Velasquez dress, silver and apple-green, beautiful and abundant, candid but remote, her hair the color of Villa, her exquisite Tudor face."[78] Wescott considered her a "proud and curious woman . . . [who] has the finest mind."[79] The following month he wrote to Wheeler, who had remained in New York: "I want to know [Wyndham] Lewis better, & Eliot somewhat, & know the Butts' England and God's Italy"—but it was not primarily Butts's personality which in-

trigued him. In London he read *Speed the Plough and Other Stories*, Butts's first collection of stories, and enthused to Wheeler: "if you knew Mary Butts' imagination . . . that book I'm reviewing, I'sll [sic] send it [to] you soon."[80] This "extremely important" book had an incalculable influence on Wescott's development as a writer. He described it in the 1960s as "the first work of fiction by a writer of my own generation to arouse my enthusiasm."[81] In 1923 it became part of his mental landscape and his love for Wheeler: "How beautiful are Klee & Eliot & the Egyptian heads & Speed the Plough & thoughts of them—how beautiful the intricate sense of richness in possessing these things, seemingly so much greater than their mere sum—How beautiful to love you—"[82] On the reverse of the typed manuscript of his story "Sacre de Printemps," completed in June 1923, Wescott wrote: "Influence of Mary Butts."[83]

"Extremely anxious to have it printed," Wescott sent his review of *Speed the Plough* to Wheeler, asking him to get their mutual friend the American poet Marianne Moore to recommend it to Dr Watson, the owner and editor of *The Dial*.[84] If she was not interested perhaps Dr (William Carlos) Williams might like it for *Contact*. But Moore, reported Wheeler, was "delighted" by Westcott's review.[85]

Wescott's review of *Speed the Plough* was not her introduction to Butts's work.[86] On the contrary, Moore may have been one of the first writers to have recognised the power and significance of Butts's writing when she first read the story "Speed the Plough/Plow" in *The Dial* in 1921. In July 1923 Moore asked Bryher whether she knew and liked Butts's work.[87] The publication of the collection of stories prompted her to explain her enthusiasm more fully:

> "Speed the Plough" has inspired and entertained me very much. It is one of the stories which appeared in *The Dial* some years ago, which is responsible for my having questioned you about Mary Butts, more I fear, than I knew I was doing; the whole book is differentiated to me, from those books in which the author seems infected with the desire to share a nervous collapse with others; I feel dignity and tragedy in it; as well as the mere capacity for suffering; an authentic not induced directness, and a compressed humor which is most grateful: "I know a born milkman when I see one and I don't mind telling you, you're it;" "the girl would leave the room with her irrelevant hauteur and the mother's voice would drop to a hiss and out would drop a toad and Charles

> would improve on it;" "it's more than a stanza, it's a canto." In [the story] "In the South" the incident of the camera is a master-craftsman's synthesis.[88]

Two years earlier, in July 1922, Moore had written to her friend the American writer Robert McAlmon, describing her high regard not only for Butts's work but for Butts's critical opinion of Moore's own work.[89] In doing so she made an important and tellingly Modernist claim about the overlapping relationship between poetry and prose: "It encourages me very much that Mary Butts . . . should admire my work. There is something to be said for this reluctance to call it poetry for sometimes I deliberately insert a prose phrase with a view to its standing as prose and I myself should not have called the collection in my book 'poems' but 'observations' but I also think that if a piece of writing is not ridiculous in itself yet sounds highflown as prose, it might as well be classified as poetry. . . . Mary Butts is quite startling in impact and untrammeled diction."[90]

Little surprise that in 1937 Moore should praise Bryher's posthumous tribute to Butts, which includes the words: "I do not know if we can speak, with poets, of tragedy or doom? . . . Mary was of the few who matter, a builder of English and I have never doubted since I read her first short story ["Angele au Couvent" (1923)] that she belonged to the Immortals. . . . Who has noticed that there is a spoken as well as a visual, quality in Mary's work? We call them stories because of the way they are printed, actually they are poems."[91]

McAlmon is a crucial link in the bibliographical history as well as the reputation of Butts's work. As a result of his marriage of convenience to Bryher in 1921 (he provided her with the freedom to be with H.D., she provided him part of her huge private income), McAlmon set up his influential Paris publishing house Contact Editions (1923–26) and published Butts's novel *Ashe of Rings* (1925).

The personal relationships between all these writers was often a troubled one; as McAlmon (who encouraged Bryher to meet Butts and read her work) wittily declared in a Steinian comment when looking back at their so-called Lost Generation: "It's a problem to know what to say about events and people. They are as they are as they are and were as they were as they were and they wasn't roses."[92] Yet when Butts died unexpectedly in 1937, Bryher and H.D. looked for a way to pay tribute to Butts's contribution to Modern letters, offering to pay for a stone to be

erected which would commemorate Butts's literary achievements. When Butts's mother curtly refused their offer—she did not even state Butts's profession as a writer on her tombstone—Bryher provided what was in many senses a much more fitting tribute: her press, the Brendin Publishing Co, posthumously published Butts's *Last Stories* (1938).[93]

But this is to move too swiftly forward to Butts's death. In 1923 Wheeler was publishing a series of lavishly produced individual poems which he called Manikins. With Butts's blessing in May 1923 Wescott sent him her poem "Pythian Ode" for a possible Manikin. Other possibilities were poems by Hart Crane and John Rodker, who coincidentally was in New York with Kay Boyle in May 1923. Wheeler met him at that time, writing to Wescott that "John Rodker . . . was very pleasant in a cramped British way. I entirely forgot that you had mentioned his being the husband of Mary Butts, and boldly asked him to tell me all about her, which he did, praising her work and saying she was 'extremely beautiful in certain lights,' afterwards adding, 'as a matter of fact she's my wife, although I'm not living with her.'"[94] Wheeler agreed to print "Pythian Ode" as a Manikin, telling Wescott that "Marianne [Moore] thinks the Butts poem has great power, and thinks Mary B. an infinitely greater figure than Katherine Mansfield whom she finds greatly overestimated."[95] Lack of funds, however, meant that any further Manikins had to be abandoned. By coincidence Ford Madox Ford visited Wheeler in June 1924 looking for copy for his influential little magazine, *transatlantic review*. Given that "Pythian Ode" was published in the September issue, it may well have been that Wheeler offered it to Ford during this visit.

Wescott's relationship with Butts had a further dimension through his affair with her brother, Tony, who, unlike Wescott, was unhappy about his homosexuality. As Wescott wrote to Wheeler: "Anthony . . . told me how his nerves and body cry out for men lovers, have always cried—but it seems a blind alley, leaving his imagination unfed, his spiritual desire cheated. He is divided and in anguish. Women he has had, and they do not delight him. . . . he said that he would 'be glad to die in the next war,' and deprecated and cast scorn upon his feeling for men as a dividing and torturing and sterile physical taste, which alienated his potency from his imagination."[96]

As is witnessed by the journal, Butts was far more attuned to the creative power of homosexual desire than was her troubled brother. Praising Wescott for his positive influence on Tony she declared in a letter to him: "I hope more than most things that you two will . . . 'have a fair voyage to

Mitylene [the capital of Lesbos].'"[97] Her nonjudgmental attitude towards sexual practice and homosexuality—she described her homosexual friends as her "Achilles set"—has been praised by the New York poet John Ashbery. "The homosexual [characters] she treats with a sympathy and openness astonishing for the England of her time," he declared in a tribute which in part explains her appeal to such different homosexual American poets as Frank O'Hara, Robert Duncan and John Wieners.[98]

Butts's friendship with Wescott (and Wheeler) developed over the 1920s as Butts settled in France, primarily in Paris but often in Villefranche, where at the now-famous Hotel Welcome (a large hotel overlooking the bay) she lived, wrote and socialised with a number of artists including Jean Cocteau, the French composer Georges Auric, Isadora Duncan, Virgil Thomson, and the English writer Douglas Goldring. From 1926 onwards Wheeler and Wescott rented La Cabane, a house in the hills above Villefranche, and it was here that Lynes photographed Butts and her friends. They made several visits to the nearby classical port of Antibes (Antipolis) with its Latin plaque marking the resting place of Septentrion, a twelve-year-old Greek boy who danced two days and pleased—and this inscription became part of their mythology. Wescott addressed Lynes as Septentrion and Butts incorporated the inscription into her poem "Casanova at Antibes" as well as her 1928 essay on Antibes tellingly entitled "Septentrion."[99]

Wheeler and Wescott shared Butts's enthusiasm for *J'Adore* (1928), the lyrical narrative of Cocteau's new lover at that time, Jean Desbordes.[100] They also introduced Butts to a young Harvard graduate, Harcourt Wesson Bull. By a strange coincidence Butts and Bull met again in 1935 where, in the much quieter yet equally Hellenic world of Sennen, West Cornwall, Bull came to stay with his lover Angus Davidson in No Place, a thatched cottage near Butts's bungalow that she had found for Davidson. Reentering her life after her separation from Atkin, Bull offered friendship that was crucial to Butts, inspiring her to start writing "Julian the Apostate"—the classical biography she was working on when she died. He was struck by the power of her autobiography *The Crystal Cabinet* in 1935: "when she read the description of her old home [Salterns] and what it had become, 'its back broken,' her voice broke."[101] Their shared love of the classics—Bull delighted Butts by comparing her to Plato's Diotima—led them to hold a riotous "Greek party" in London in March 1929.[102]

Butts's glamour, panache, and showy excess at such parties have at

times deflected contemporaries' and later literary critics' attention so that they have concentrated on the public persona rather than on the startling innovation and serious intent of her writing, which was "to shew people beauty, soundness" by "retuning the senses" of her readers "to a higher pitch" (spring 1927, 15–6 March 1928).[103] In their letters Moore and H.D. recognised and discussed Butts's significance each time she published a new book or a story. Of her collection of stories *Several Occasions* (1932) Moore declared: "I am delighted with it. The acute sensitiveness . . . excites the utmost sympathy. And though she keeps certain fetishes, the refracting beauties that she insists on finding to look at, and the chamois-like agility of word and idea, are a fine sight."[104] Of her third published novel, *Death of Felicity Taverner* (1932), H.D. enthused: "The Butts is good, pure high-brow melodrama, great fun, with Butts' usual very 'magic' prose poems and earth and seed and sky."[105] Dorothy Richardson was particularly struck by Butts's story "The Guest" when it was published in 1935 in *Life and Letters To-Day,* while one of Pound's favourite Butts stories was "Green."[106] Wescott and Wheeler were equally enthusiastic about Butts's novel *Armed with Madness*, whose title, incidentally, was suggested by Wescott: "Mary brought her new book, just completed—it's far and away her best—her 'set' all roped together with madness and magic—with some lively Freudian melodrama for a conclusion."[107] Although the source of the title has not been traced, in 2000 it was chosen, in tribute to Butts's novel, as the name of a new climbing route at Pinnacles National Monument in California. Butts would doubtless have appreciated this oblique linking of her writing back into the landscape.

By the summer of 1927 the friendship between Butts and Wescott had cooled considerably, largely due to her and Cocteau's opium-taking. It didn't help when Butts wrote her "damned good story" "The House-Party" (1927) in which as McAlmon wrote to Pound, "one could recognize the pimpishness of her heroes, the snobs ~~one of who is our friend Wescott, who Mary should know, would never be securely naughty.~~"[108] This story was printed in the American journal *Pagany* in 1930 (without Butts's knowledge at the time), despite its claim to publish work primarily by Americans. This has led to the mistaken claim that she was herself American.[109]

Whatever their differences in 1927, Butts and Wescott were socialising again in Paris at the end of 1928, and when Moore asked Butts to review Wescott's latest volume of stories, *Good-bye Wisconsin,* for *The Dial*

the following spring, Butts did so with pleasure.[110] "It pleases and rather terrifies one that you should have perceived so much more about our country than is written down, and we are grateful for the substance with which you endow the book," Moore declared to Butts.[111] The compliment is all the more striking given the fact that Butts never visited the United States.[112]

A Writer's Journal

This capacity for appreciating her contemporaries' work whatever her relations with them personally is revealed on numerous occasions in Butts's journal. She may or may not have liked them, but she *knew* good writing when she read it, always searching for better ways to give verbal expression to Modernity. "There are two kinds of reading," she decided in May 1920, "reading which is contemplation—even a kind of vision & reading for information. For the first only the best will do, for the rest—then one can let in anything one would like to read in the world." For contemplation she read Strindberg's autobiographical writings on the supernatural and M. R. James and Arthur Machen's superb ghost stories; she was particularly indebted to Harrison and Murray, James Frazer, and Jessie Weston for their translations and studies of the Classics and the worlds of mythology and legend. Her journal is shot through with quotations from the Bible, ballads, Blake, Pound, Eliot, popular songs, William Morris, Shakespeare, and, especially, Yeats, Kipling, Shelley, and Emerson, with whom she felt particular kinship. All these writers and others are sources of contemplation. "To reread [Lytton] Strachey's *Books and Characters* like lying back to sip an exquisite wine. O the loss of that amity and that wit," she exclaimed in September 1933, lamenting Strachey's death the previous year.

From 1930 onwards, when she began regular reviewing to increase her income, she read many books that often provided more food for information than contemplation. Yet, all too aware of her own need for praise, she was a kind reviewer.[113] Reviewing also brought her in contact with new friends whose work was often further sources of contemplation: Charles Williams, Hugh Ross Williamson, Richard Ellis Roberts, Jack Lindsay.

People might come and go but there was always work to be done. Butts was as concerned as Modernists such as Ford, Joyce, and Eliot to free up writing stylistically and morally in the 1910s, yet she was never

complacent about her or their contribution to the history of literature: "It has taken me all my life to fix the little of which I can be sure, arrive at such poor theorisings from them as I have," she noted humbly one evening in Paris in August 1929, adding with a characteristically memorable lyrical description: "While I am haunted that they slip by me each day in millions . . . the evening gathers, perceptibly for the first time earlier; & the Paris night arrives to hang jewels over the bends of this river where man has decided that there shall be light, by preference coloured light, but light."

Nor did she often find writing easy (*Death of Felicity Taverner* was an exception, see 7 July 1932). Although after its completion she described *Armed with Madness* as "rather a beauty," the opening sentence took her "weeks" to write.[114] Butts was well aware of standing on the shoulders of giants. In March 1930 she described the relationship between the modern and the classical in an entry that moves between what might seem unlikely dancing partners: Eric Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) (which Butts had just finished reading), J. E. Harrison, Lord Macaulay, Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), and her grand finale, Homer:

> I re-enter greek religion and carry on where Jane Harrison left off. I can make "earth prayers" again and praises, without the least reservation or hesitation—at last. . . . The lesson began more than 15 years ago—how bad a scholar to have taken so long over the full inference. For on one part, on the day I grasped that first principle of greek prose, & turned Macaulay into that language, finding the concrete for each of his abstracts. . . . I felt the subconscious at work, stress & doubt & that sense of incompleteness that gives me no rest. The relief arrived at now comes on like dancing. Dancing Ledge on the Dorset coast: dancing-floor—where the sun's ballet mixes with the sea's—Odyssey again—so we're round again—this time by the field lavatories in *All Quiet on the Western Front*.
>
> Yet—& quite apart—Homer lacks no virility, his "noble sentiments" are—miracle of miracles—realities as Mr Bloom in the lavatory of this day's Odyssey—yet certain subjects are taboo in him—above all digestive incidents and parallels and the mechanism of sex.
>
> So, is it possible for some fool to call him responsible for all subsequent attitudes before & rejections of the "mot bas" . . .

> "Homer" had to cut because of his first function as "Kourotrophos" of a great race & their bringer out of barbarism? The cults & gods he does not celebrate were there to keep them steady, after his cleansing, sufficiently grubbed & re-sweetened by the earth.

Butts's journal seems itself to thread together a collection of verbal beads which recur in different combinations and patterns: Kouros—Daimon—Freud—Frazer—Yeats—Sophrosynê—Achilles Set—ivresse—Sancgrail—Metcalfe—Kipling—Ouspensky—magic—Norse Sagas—Cocteau—Cinema—astral journey—Christianity—Crowley—Blake—Emerson—Hellas—Blavatsky—aeroplane—Heirmamenê—Organon—physics—Plato—Russian ballet—Weston—Einstein—The Waste Land—knight's move—temenos—rite de passage—Harrison . . . as she seeks her age's formula.

The "formula" Butts sought was one that would be as inclusive of all elements of life as possible—not one that iconoclastically breaks taboos at the price of an inevitable reductiveness: be it to sex or magic or materialism. Her comment on "our young man with a future," as she prophetically described Evelyn Waugh, is equally applicable to herself—"here, anyhow, is a mind that will never be content with less than the truth of things" (June 1931). Never particularly musical, Butts's medium of expression was language. Her lyricism was in part achieved by a melding of lyrics from Mozart, ballad, and popular song, leading one contemporary critic to describe *Armed with Madness* as "a brilliant and subtle . . . expression of this Age of Jazz . . . Henry James in the idiom of 1928."[115] The comment is a just one: Butts's writing is a dance to the music of her time.

Editing the Journal

When I am dead and someone edits these—how many phrases will be picked out to illustrate my bad taste?
5 July 20

When Virginia Woolf kept her journal she was well aware of its future interest to the public. Not having the supportive entourage of a Bloomsbury, Butts's journal is somehow more frank. She was quite rightly as confident of her significance as a writer as Woolf was, yet foresaw that her recognition would be posthumous—as indeed it has been. In addition to

the comments to her future editor in the journal, there is her more explicit prediction in a letter to her lawyer shortly before her death. There she described her journal as:

> Rather an explosive document in parts, especially as the persons sometimes mentioned in it get better known. . . . Again it all depends as to how far I am remembered—. . . I think I shall be remembered as an English writer.[116] Also, apart from these, it has interesting pictures of the post-War world, in London and in Paris, and its actors. At all events, it must be kept. It has possible value (I) as MS, ie., original work in itself. (II) as a source of my own life. (III) as containing facts about our life and times.[117]

As her editor I have endeavoured to keep to the spirit of Butts's intentions. A word limit meant inevitable selectivity—the present selection is about half the length of the original—and, given the fact that a biography of Butts already exists, I have been concerned to provide a text that charts her development as a *writer*, which is, after all, her self-avowed raison d'être. Thus references to her fraught familial relationships have been omitted unless strictly relevant, while bearing in mind that precarious 'No Man's Land' which is the borderline between the life and the work. In order to provide a fluid narrative, omissions have not always been signalled, although my insertions are clearly marked in square brackets or italics, except for titles of works that have been silently expanded to their full form. I have provided the names of authors and the publication dates of post-1900 texts (if Butts read them in translation, this is the date I give) as well as sources of the many quotations in her journal—when I recognised them. Butts's marginal comments are noted by a double-dagger (‡) and appear in smaller type next to the journal entries to which they refer. In 1921 Butts's then-estranged husband John Rodker read her journal and made a number of marginal comments—these likewise have been reprinted as smaller type next to Butt's journal text. Three small black boxes between text represent substantial gaps in the original journal, and italicised editorial résumés have been inserted where these seem helpful. Otherwise all the words are Butts's own. Occasional awkwardness in expression and spelling mistakes have been amended where these might lead to incomprehensibility, but I have retained Butts's use of the ampersand for 'and' as well as her use of the lower-case for adjectives derived from proper nouns.

Keeping a journal is, of course, only one aspect of a person's life. In

addition to members of her family, a considerable number of Butts's friends and influences are hardly mentioned in the following pages, among them the dancers Anton Dolin and Rupert Doone; the painters Cedric Morris and Robert Medley; and the writers Richard Ellis Roberts, Frank Baker, Harcourt Wesson Bull, Jack Lindsay, and Hugh Ross Williamson. Biographical footnotes are provided wherever possible about those present, while fuller biographical outlines of the most significant figures in Butts's life (marked with an asterisk on first mention in the text) appear at the end of the book, especially where information is not otherwise readily available. Finally, maps of Dorset and Cornwall are included to clarify Butts's references to often small local settlements and landmarks, and a glossary defines the more obscure concepts and terms that she uses throughout.

Notes

1. Richard Aldington, *Death of a Hero*, 2nd ed. (London: Consul, 1965), 39.
2. Mary Butts to Hugh Ross Williamson, 4 June 1932, Hugh Ross Williamson papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas.
3. Heather Ingman, *Women's Fiction between the Wars* (Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 9; Penny Brown, *The Poison at the Source* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 4.
4. See 11 October 1931.
5. Butts, "Taking Thought," *Time and Tide*, 14, 24 (17 June 1933), 738.
6. By the time she comes to write her autobiography Butts understands that given the limited education of middle class women of her mother's generation, it was inevitable that she would be "naturally ignorant" of how to best manage the family assets. Mary Butts, *The Crystal Cabinet*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Carcanet, 1988), 13.
7. As Jacqueline Rose points out, the often insightful introductions and afterwords to her republished work notwithstanding, Butts's work has "until fairly recently, been considered relatively marginal to the modernist canon." Rose, "Bizarre Objects: Mary Butts and Elizabeth Bowen," *Critical Quarterly*, 42, 1 (Oct. 2000), 77. As Rose's own interest makes clear, this is no longer the case. I have mentioned a number of the more recent articles and expressions of critical interest throughout this edition.
8. Butts, "The Heavenward Side," *The Outlook*, 17, 437 (30 June 1906), 504 and [Butts], "The Poetry of Hymns," *The Outlook*, 18, 46 (1 December 1906), 696–7.
9. For an extensive bibliography, see Nathalie Blondel, *Mary Butts: Scenes from the Life* (Kingston: McPherson & Co, 1998), 513–22 (hereafter cited as Blondel, *Mary Butts*) and below, note 11.
10. Butts, "The Master's Last Dancing," ed. Nathalie Blondel and Camilla

Bagg, *The New Yorker*, (30 March 1998), 110–3; Butts, "Bloomsbury," ed. Nathalie Blondel and Camilla Bagg, with an introduction by Nathalie Blondel, *Modernism/ Modernity*, 5, 2 (April 1998), 31–46; Butts, "Fumerie," ed. Nathalie Blondel and Camilla Bagg, with an introduction and notes by Nathalie Blondel, *Conjunctions*, 31 (November 1998), 178–88. I am currently setting up a Mary Butts website.

11. Ruth Hoberman, *Regendering Classicism* (New York: SUNY, 1997), 177. See entries in *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English*, ed. Virginia Bain, Pamela Clements, Isobel Grundy (London: B. T. Batsford, 1990); *The Bloomsbury Guide to Women's Literature*, ed. Clare Buck (London: Bloomsbury, 1992); *The Oxford Guide to British Women Writers*, ed. Joanne Shattock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); *The Cambridge Guide to Women's Literature in English*, ed. Lorna Sage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); *Encyclopedia of Literary Modernism*, ed. Paul Poplawski (New York: Greenwood, 2003); *New Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004). For articles see *Women's Fiction and the Great War*, ed. S. Raitt and T. Tate (London: Oxford University Press, 1997); *Women's Writing on the First World War*, ed. Cardinal, Goldman & Hattaway (London: Oxford University Press, 1999); Roslyn Foy, *Ritual, Myth and Mysticism in the Work of Mary Butts* (Fayetteville: Arkansas University Press, 2000).
12. Jim Reilly, "The Novel as Art Form," in *Literature and Culture in Modern Britain I: 1900–1929*, ed. Clive Bloom (London: Longman, 1997), 56. See Butts's review of Ezra Pound's *Make it New* in "'Mr Ezra Pound is the Goods,'" *The Sunday Times* (28 October 1934), 12.
13. Ford Madox Ford to T. R. Smith, 27 July 1931, in Max Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life*, Vol. II (London, Oxford University Press,1996), title page.
14. Butts, *The Crystal Cabinet*, 17–19.
15. Ibid, 22, 10–11.
16. Butts unpublished poem, "The Adventure," undated [1913/14], Butts papers.
17. Butts to Wescott, S Egliston Cottage, Kimmeridge, Corfe Castle, Dorset, undated [1923], Glenway Wescott papers.
18. *The Crystal Cabinet*, 14 and Butts, "Mr. Powys's Dorset," *The Sunday Times* (18 February 1934), 11.
19. Tony Butts to Mary Butts, undated [autumn 1932], Butts papers.
20. See E. M. Forster to Butts, 14 March 1933, in Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 332.
21. D. H. Lawrence to Martin Secker, 23 July 1924, in *Selected Literary Criticism*, ed Anthony Beal (London: Heinemann, 1967), 139.
22. H.D. to Bryher, 30.8.[35], Bryher Papers.
23. For Daimon, see Glossary. "Lawrence, as Aldous [Huxley] said, obeyed his Daemon, was possessed in a real sense by his creative genius, whereas Aldous, in humility and honest doubt, did not believe in his." Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography, Volume I* (Quartet, 1979), 183; see

Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: the Man and the Masks* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 195. See Plato, *Cratylus*, 397c and *Xenophon's Memorabilia of Socrates* (London: Dent, 1910), 149.

24. For "fourth dimension," see Glossary. The subtitle "Apprentie Sorcière" to her 1921 journal shows the extent of Butts's involvement in her magical 'apprenticeship' at this stage in her life.
25. Butts would have completely agreed with Yeats's belief that "Greece, could we but approach it with eyes as young as its own, might renew our youth." W. B. Yeats, "A Letter to Michael's Schoolmaster," II, iv (1930 journal), in *W. B. Yeats: Selected Criticism and Prose*, ed. (London: Pan, 1980), 383.
26. Wescott to George Platt Lynes, 21 March [1928], Wescott papers. See May 1926.
27. Wilma Meikle, *Towards a Sane Feminism* (London: Grant Richards, 1916), 44.
28. *The Daily Mail*, in Dorothy Goldman with Jane Gledhill and Judith Hattaway, *Women Writers and the Great War* (New York: Twayne, 1995), 14.
29. See Anthea Trodd, *Women's Writing in English: Britain 1900–1945* (London: Longman, 1998). Hoberman, op. cit.
30. Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris 1900–1940* (London: Virago, 1994), 25.
31. Recent studies which, inexplicably, omit reference to Butts include Janet Montefiore, *Men and Women Writers of the 1930s* (London: Routledge, 1996); John Lucas, *The Radical Twenties* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 1997); Heather Ingman, *Women's Fiction between the Wars* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); *The Virago Book of Women and the Great War*, ed. Joyce Marlow (London: Virago, 1998); Trodd, *Women's Writing in English*; Simon Trezise, *The West Country As a Literary Invention: Putting Fiction in its Place* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 2000).
32. Hoberman, *Regendering Classicism*, 179.
33. One of her contemporaries, the British writer Rebecca West, stated that she had "always felt the lack of a university education as a real handicap." West to Miss Fleming, 1 December 1960, in *Selected Letters of Rebecca West*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 3. For a more general account of women in higher education, see Carol Dyhouse, *No distinction of sex?: Women in British universities, 1870–1939* (London: University College London Press, 1995); Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Wheatsheaf, 1981), 40–78 and Ingman, *Women's Fiction between the Wars*, 3–8.
34. Butts, *The Crystal Cabinet*, 123. See also 180.
35. Ibid, 240.
36. H.D. to Bryher, undated [22 March 1933], Bryher papers. In 1938 Metro Goldwyn are interested in one of Butts's books—*The Crystal Cabinet* probably, but this is not made clear—unfortunately the interest came to naught. See Robert Herring to Bryher, 12 March 1938, Bryher papers.

37. See H.D. to Bryher, 11 October 1918, Bryher papers.
38. This comment is remarkably like the metaphor of the androgenous third sex described by Plato in *The Symposium*, a key text for Butts.
39. It was part of Butts's chagrin in that all these men were primarily homosexual. In his youth Atkin had been the lover of the British poet Siegfried Sassoon as well as the Bloomsbury economist Maynard Keynes and his legendary beauty had been such that the sculptor Epstein made a cast of him called variously Seraph or Cherubim.
40. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, in Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Michèle Barrett (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 76.
41. "Dangerous," ed. Nathalie Blondel and Camilla Bagg, 109. TS, Blondel private papers. I discuss this novel in my unpublished conference paper, "Dangerous Women: Mary Butts's engagement with the 'sex-war,'" *Sexualities 1880–1930*, Edge Hill University, July 2000.
42. Butts, *Dangerous*, ed. Nathalie Blondel and Camilla Bagg, with an introduction and notes by Nathalie Blondel (Trent Editions: Nottingham), forthcoming. For more information see http://english.ntu.ac.uk/trenteditions.
43. Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge*, 2nd ed. (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1991), 120.
44. Ibid, 121.
45. The position of the sixteen thousand COs and their supporters was a terribly difficult one. While an early commentator considered the COs to be "men who unquestionably, by common consent, are men of the highest character, and in other matters good citizens," by 1919 the Brace Committee on Employment of Conscientious Objectors reported that "many of the men were feeble in physique, weak of will or unstable of character. Nearly all were cranks, incapable of sustained collective effort, and cohering only to air their grievances or to promote queer and unusual ends." Herbert Samuel and Brace Committee findings quoted in John Rae, *Conscience & Politics: The British Government and the Conscientious Objector to Military Service 1916–1919* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 174–5. For more information about and from various pacifists during the Great War, see Butts's journal entries and relevant notes throughout 1916.
46. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: Volume 3: Letters from the Front* (New Haven: Yale University Press,1994), xi.
47. See Claire Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness* (Macmillan, 1990), 48.
48. Adam Parkes, *Modernism and the Theater of Censorship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.
49. According one critic, Woolf was against "politically conscientious fiction." Reilly, "The Novel as Art Form," 57.
50. Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land: Volume 3*, xv.
51. Trodd, *Women's Writing in English*, 56.
52. At this time Butts was also looking back at her experience of the Great War

while reviewing Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* and Violet MacDonald's *Up the Attic Stairs* in "It was Like That," *The Bookman*, 84, 505 (Oct. 1933), 44. Butts, "Afterword"(1933), in *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings*, (Kingston: McPherson & Co, 1998), 232.

53. Butts, *Ashe of Rings*, in *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings*, 5.
54. Ibid, 214. This description from the novel owes much to Butts's visit to Badbury Rings on 12 March 1922.
55. "Afterword," Ibid, 232.
56. Cyril Connolly, "England Not my England," in *The Condemned Playground: Essays 1927–1944* (London: Routledge, 1946), 207.
57. Butts, *Armed with Madness* in *The Taverner Novels* (Kingston, McPherson & Co, 1992), 3–4.
58. From Marianne Moore's contemporary review, "A House-Party," *The Dial*, 85 (Sep 1928), 258–60, to Lawrence Rainey, "Good Things: Pederasty and Jazz and Opium and Research," *The London Review of Books*, 20, 14 (16 July 1998), 14–7 and Butts, *Armed with Madness*, ed. and with an introduction by Stephen Heath (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001).
59. Butts, *Death of Felicity Taverner*, in *The Taverner Novels*, 165.
60. See Ian Patterson, "'The Plan Behind the Plan': Russians, Jews and Mythologies of Change: The Case of Mary Butts," in *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew,'* ed. Laura Marcus and Brian Cheyette (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 126–40; Jacqueline Rose, "Bizarre Objects: Mary Butts and Elizabeth Bowen," 76–7; Stephen Heath, Introduction to Butts, *Armed with Madness*, xx–xxi. For my previous discussion of this misconception, see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 349–50.
61. Rainey, "Good Things," 17.
62. Butts to Angus Davidson, 4 February 1934, Butts papers.
63. *The Crystal Cabinet*, 180.
64. Butts to Hugh Ross Williamson, 1932, Williamson papers, Harry Ransom Center, Texas. Butts to Rodker, 17 December 1932, Butts papers.
65. Rodker to Butts, 19 December 1932, Butts papers.
66. For hubris, see Glossary. See Hugh Ross Williamson to Butts, undated [March 1933], Butts papers.
67. *The Crystal Cabinet*, 275. Butts's metaphor of the rocking horses may be inspired by Mark Gertler's 1916 painting *Merry-go-round*.
68. Reilly, "The Novel as Art Form," 56.
69. In addition to numerous journal entries, Butts wrote an essay on Huxley, see his biographical outline.
70. E. F. Benson, "In the Tube" (1923), in *The Collected Ghost Stories of E. F. Benson*, ed. Richard Dalby (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1999), 301.
71. The project did not, unfortunately, proceed. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 369–371.
72. W. B. Yeats, "The Symbolism of Poetry" (1920), in *Essays and Introductions* (New York: Collier Books, 1961), 155.
73. Butts, *Imaginary Letters* in *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings*, 257, 241.

74. Sewell Stokes, *Isadora Duncan* (1928) (Bath: Cedric Chivers Ltd, 1968), 156, 86–7.
75. Butts to Wescott, Hôtel Foyot, Paris, undated [1924], Wescott papers.
76. Anatole Pohorilenko, *When We Were Three* (Santa Fe: Arena Editions, 1998), 17, 21.
77. Wescott to George Platt Lynes, 3 March 1928, Wescott papers. I am sure that much more information about Wescott will be made available in Jerry Roscoe's forthcoming biography, *Glenway Wescott Personally* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2002).
78. Wescott to Monroe Wheeler, 18 March 1923, 14 June 1923, Wescott papers.
79. Wescott to Wheeler, 7 May 1923, Wescott papers.
80. Wescott to Wheeler, 8 April 1923, 30 April 1923, Wescott papers.
81. Wescott to Wheeler, 7 May 1923; Wescott to Robert Byington, 22 November 1963, Wescott papers.
82. Wescott to Wheeler 27 May 1923, Wescott papers.
83. See Wescott to Wheeler, 14 June 1923; comment on back of p15 of Wescott's typescript of "Sacre de Printemps," Wescott papers.
84. Wescott to Wheeler, 7 May 1923, Wescott papers.
85. Wheeler to Wescott, 22 May 1923.
86. For Marianne Moore's praise of *Armed with Madness*, see note 58.
87. See Moore to Bryher, 5 July 1923, in *The Selected Letters of Marianne Moore*, ed. Bonnie Costello (London: Faber, 1998), 201.
88. Moore to Bryher, 5 February 1924, Bryher papers.
89. Butts also read Moore's work: "Copies of *Minikin* [sic] have turned up, with your appreciation of Marianne Moore. I was very glad to get it, for you have forced me to get on terms with her work, which I had never done before." Butts to Wescott, undated [1923/4], Wescott papers.
90. Moore to Robert McAlmon, 28 July 1922, in *Letters of Marianne Moore*, 188.
91. Bryher, "Recognition not Farewell," *Life and Letters To-Day*, 17, 9 (Autumn 1937), 159–164, 159, in *A Sacred Quest: The Life and the Writings of Mary Butts*, ed. C. Wagstaff (Kingston: McPherson & Co, 1995), 3–10.
92. See correspondence Robert McAlmon to Bryher, undated [1923 and 1934], Bryher papers, Beinecke. McAlmon to Norman Pearson, 8 December 1952, McAlmon papers.
93. For an account of this publishing event and the reasons for the almost immediate withdrawal from publication of *Last Stories*, see 1925, note 19.
94. Wheeler to Wescott, 7 May 1923. When considering Rodker for a Manikin, Wescott wrote that Rodker's volume of poetry *Hymns* (1920)—dedicated to Butts—showed the "influence of Mary B." Wescott to Wheeler 18 May 1923, Wescott papers.
95. Wheeler to Wescott, 24 May 1923, Wescott papers. Moore's view is shared by the British critic and poet J. C. Squire in his dithyrambic review of Butts's *Several Occasions* (1932). See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 296.
96. Wescott to Wheeler, 25 March 1923, 30 March 1923, Wescott papers.

97. Butts to Wescott, Hôtel Foyot, Paris, undated [1924], Wescott papers.
98. John Ashbery, Preface to Butts, *From Altar to Chimney-Piece: Selected Stories of Mary Butts* (Kingston: McPherson, 1992), xii. For a discussion of the influence of Butts's work on O'Hara, Duncan and Wieners see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 147, 190, 433–6.
99. See Wescott to George Platt Lynes, 22 April [27], 17 August 1927, 10 September 1927, Wescott papers. Neither "Casanova in Antibes" nor "Septentrion" has been published.
100. See Wheeler to Platt Lynes, 27 February 1928 and Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 212–4.
101. Harcourt Wesson Bull, "Truth is the Heart's Desire," in Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 376.
102. For a description of the party see Blondel *Mary Butts*, 221, and Wheeler to Platt Lynes, 20 April 1929, Wescott papers.
103. See the unfortunate 'introductions' to Butts's work in Hanscombe and Smyers, *Writing for their Lives* (London: Women's Press, 1987) and Mary Hamer, "Mary Butts, Mothers, and War," in *Women's Fiction and the Great War*, ed. Raitt and Tate, 219–240.
104. Moore to Bryher, 4 April 1932, *Letters of Marianne Moore*, 263.
105. H.D. to Bryher, 10–11 December 1932, Bryher papers.
106. See Herring to Bryher, 12 August 1935, Bryher papers. Richardson, who read and admired Butts's work, particularly "Speed the Plough," expressed her regret on hearing of her death. See Richardson to Peggy Kirkaldy, 6 November 1943 and Richardson to Bryher, 19 March 1937, Richardson papers. Ezra Pound to Butts, 2 December 1931, Butts papers.
107. Wheeler to Lynes, 14 May 1927, Wescott papers.
108. McAlmon to Ezra Pound, 17 March 1930, McAlmon papers. For his description of the story, see McAlmon's letter to H.D., 8 January 1929, H.D. papers.
109. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 188. That Butts could have been American is an extraordinary misapprehension. I discuss her attitude to America in my unpublished paper "Transatlantics: the Significance of America for Mary Butts," *The Symbiosis Conference*, University of the West of England, Bristol, July 1999.
110. "When they arrived in Paris [in November 1928], all three [Wescott, Wheeler and Lynes] stayed together in Jean Guérin's apartment until he returned from London, which turned out to be sooner than they expected. . . . In Paris they continued meeting such mutual friends as Butts and [Mary] Reynolds, often eating at Le Boeuf sur le Toit, as well as going to concerts, the theater, and the ballet." Pohorilenko, *When We Were Three*, 64.
111. Moore to Butts, 15 March 1929, Butts papers. See late October/early November 1928.
112. Two letters show her intention of going to America. See Butts to Wescott,

43 Belsize Park Gardens [1923/4] and Hôtel Foyot, Paris [summer 1924], Wescott papers.

113. Richard Ellis Roberts to Butts, 8 April 1934, in Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 351.
114. Butts to Douglas Goldring, Hôtel du Coteau, Tréboul, Finistère, undated [August 1927], Goldring papers, University of Victoria, Canada. See Herring to H.D., March [1932], H.D. papers.
115. Eugene Lohrke, "Cups and Spears," *New York Herald Tribune* (10 June 1928), 16.
116. Butts's comment is a direct contradiction of the mistaken claim that "Modernists embraced a repudiation of nationality," Trodd, *Women's Writing in English*, 26.
117. Butts to Tom Swan, 21 January 1937, Butts papers.

1916

When Mary Butts begins her journal in July 1916—halfway through the Great War—she is twenty-five years old and living in London with Eleanor Rogers. Their two-year sapphic relationship is crumbling and Butts has become involved with the Jewish poet John Rodker,* who is at that time in Surrey, where he is hiding from the military authorities (at the home of the pacifist poet Robert Trevelyan) to avoid conscription, which was introduced in February 1916.[1] Butts is an ardent socialist and pacifist at this time, working voluntarily on several committees—such as the Children's Care Committee in London and the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), an organisation set up in response to conscription in July 1916. When the journal opens she has just completed her novel "Dangerous" (then known as "Unborn Gods").*

All unpublished manuscripts and correspondence mentioned in the footnotes are at the Beinecke Library, Yale, unless otherwise stated.

[1] For more information about Rodker and his movements during the Great War, see his biographical outline. Robert Calverley Trevelyan (1872–1951), poet and classical scholar. In the 1890s he had shared a house with the painter and art critic Roger Fry, a friend of Butts; see 15 December 1918.

21 July 1916 [27 Ferncroft Ave, Hampstead, London]

Finished CO Story.[2] Not so bad. Went out & had a regal tea. Fetched MS from Mr Sanger.[3] Cooked. Wrote to John [Rodker] a stupid letter.

22 July 1916

Quite alone. Revised story. Letter from Jimmy [John Rodker]. "And Mary, you're not here to share it, my dear, my dear." Tried to look up Gwen [Ingram].[4] No good—there's no one left to play with.

23 July 1916

Revised story. [Remembering with pleasure] the day Michio Ito came to lunch.[5]

Tea at Blue Cockatoo [café]. Walk in Battersea park.

[2] "CO story"—unidentified; given Butts's political work at the time this was probably about a Conscientious Objector. See 11 October 1916.

[3] This may well be Charles Percy Sanger (1871–1930), British Chancery Barrister, friend and contemporary of Bertrand Russell at Trinity College Cambridge. A letter exists from the British writer and editor Edward Garnett (1868–1937), reader for Duckworth Press, to Sanger, who has clearly written asking where Butts should send her MS, most probably of "Dangerous" (then called "Unborn Gods"). Garnett suggests Butts try the publisher Hutchinson first. Garnett to Sanger, 15 July 1916, Butts papers. For more information on this controversial pacifist novel see Introduction.

[4] Gwen Ingram, Butts's lecturer at Westfield College, was sacked in 1912 and Butts was asked to leave without taking her degree after college authorities discovered that the two secretly attended the Derby together. For more information see 1920, note 6 and Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 25–6. Their relationship was clearly a passionate one, at least on Butts's side. On leaving Westfield Ingram travelled to South Africa, returning to London two years later, an event which Butts commemorated in "G. I. 2.9.14." Far from having forgotten her, Butts describes herself as "turn[ing] to your soul I must love, but save not nor set free," in a poem which opens: "So, you return/ O bitter delectable girl. When we set you aside/ The spirit of mockery leaned on our shoulder and cried . . . / "Yes, you will burn/ All over again for her wantonness crucified." Unpublished MS poem, Butts papers. From the fact that Butts and Rogers visit Ingram on a number of occasions in 1916, it would seem that Ingram is part of the Sapphic circle to which Butts belonged but from which she is slowly withdrawing.

[5] Michio Ito (1892–1961), Japanese concert dancer and choreographer. Apparently discovered "in a backstairs room" in London by Ezra Pound in 1915, Ito began his professional debut as a recital dancer in London in May that year. In January 1916 Rodker directed Ito at the Margaret Morris Theatre, and in the spring of 1916 Ito choreographed and gave a private performance of W. B. Yeats's play *At the Hawk's Well*. This was "a new form of drama, based upon the Japanese [Noh plays] but suited to European conventions utilizing music and dance." Ellmann, *Yeats: the Man and the*

24 July 1916

A bad day. Eleanor seems to have spoiled everything for me now. At least she has shown me everything in the vilest possible light. All that one could do honestly & gaily without back thought seen through her mind becomes distorted to the utmost infamy. To be defiled by the one friend in whom one had infinite trust. Where has my fault come in? Committee—VDC.[6] Bad pain in the evening. Eleanor kind. Blast has 2 tabby kittens.[7]

25 July 1916

John tomorrow. Eleanor threatened to tell "all she knows" [about Rodker's evasion of conscription by hiding in Surrey].[8] Misfortunes can become laughable & no longer possible to consider her as a human being. She must be treated with the patience & indifference fit for an animal or a vicious child. Her behaviour is hardly human with odd fits of penitence. She was kinder that night. She can't be well—the war is very heavy on us all.

26 July 1916

Went down to see John. A good day. Arranged to go down 4th–8th August. The peace and beauty of that place [Holmwood, Surrey], & the quality of the minds in it make me ache after the enforced beastliness of one's own. Eleanor very cross.

Masks, 214. It is unclear whether Butts saw this performance. In the autumn of 1916 Ito immigrated to America, where he worked as a choreographer with his own company and other innovative theatre groups. For Butts's later comment on Yeats and the Noh, see 18 September 1917.

[6] Due to the large increase in the spread of VD, the National Commission on Venereal Disease was set up in 1913. Part of Butts's (voluntary) work was research for this commission. The commission reports back in October 1916 when the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease is founded. See 17 October 1916. Its sensible yet controversial recommendation was to provide Salvarsan for free. Previously this expensive medication had been only available to those rich enough to afford it.

[7] Butts may well have named her cat after Wyndham Lewis's short-lived but controversial magazine *BLAST!* (1914–15).

[8] The secrecy of Rodker's whereabouts is such that he has not told his close friend the Jewish British poet Isaac Rosenberg, who thinks Rodker is still in prison. See Rosenberg to Mr [Robert] Trevelyan [postmark 15 June 1916], *The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg*, ed. Ian Parsons (London: Chatto and Windus, 1979), 235.

27 July 1916

MS to Hutchinson.[9] Letter from Hal [T.][10] [Attendance at Military Service] Tribunal all day very interesting.[11]

30 July 1916 (Sunday)

Eleanor in great pain. Very brave but collapsed—throat ghastly. O Henry [short stories] no good as a pick-me-up. Tried gramophone—better. Wrote to John. He didn't come but it's as well. One feels so isolated all alone with a very sick girl. Every one is away & I want the sea—the sea. Went for a walk in Kensington Gardens. Read Bertrand Russell, *Problems of Philosophy* [(1912)]. Remembered my throat paint. Tried it, did Eleanor good. We sat & watched her cough up matter into the basalt bowl. Normally it would have made us both sick, as it was we were wild with interest.

1 August 1916

Eleanor worse. 102.4 [°F]. 'Phoned for doctor. Ordered her to nursing home. Much the best. Now she's gone, I can't bear it. I can go to John now, but it hardly counts (it will tho' later). I can't go up to our room that she's slept in. There are books there and flowers, & the basalt bowl and the bottles—oh it's making me cry out of all reason. Just before she went she smiled—like she used to last August. Six months since she smiled like that—longer than that—must go out & order things.

Curse [period].

[9] See note 3.

[10] Full surname unknown—Butts's first male lover in 1913. Butts sees him on and off during the war. In her unpublished poem "G.I., H.T., M.B. Spring 1918" Butts describes herself, Hal and Gwen Ingram as "broken warriors of the night." MS poem, Butts papers.

[11] Butts worked for the first National Council for Civil Liberties (1916–1919) as did other prominent intellectuals and writers, such as Virginia Woolf, her brother Adrian Stephen, Bertrand Russell, George Bernard Shaw. See note 32. The NCCL supported Conscientious Objectors when they came before Tribunals established to decide on the legitimacy of their objections to fighting. For a detailed account of what Butts would have experienced at these Tribunals see Adrian Stephen, "The Tribunals," in *We Did Not Fight: 1914–18 Experiences of War Resisters*, ed. Julian Bell (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1935), 377–92. Objectors included Bernard Langdon-Davies, Gilbert Cannan, Douglas Goldring, Clive Bell, and Lytton Strachey. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 4–6, 44–7.

Bought her the dressing-gown—flowered crêpe de chine—very very lovely. Also grapes—like Dionysus,' & roses. Alone now in the flat. Curse not so bad. Heat appalling. Time to discover now whether the flat alone is endurable or not.

2 August 1916

Flat very endurable. Saw Eleanor this morning, much better. Read *Problems of Philosophy* and the Sonnets for the first time. Sheer treasure trove. "But thine immortal lustre . . ." The intimacy of them. . . . Letter from John very good. Eleanor in the afternoon—not so well. The old smile again once. Wrote to Wilma [Meikle].[12]

3 August 1916

Tribunal. Dull. Went to Hendersons & bought Morel's book [*Truth and the War* (1916)].[13] Roger Casement.[14] Afternoon with Eleanor better, but uncertain. Bitterness & affection mixed made my own temper doubtful. When she comes back will this begin again or shall I have a chance to love & live & work in peace? It's up to us now to fight, the older men are perishing fast. I must never give in to her any more. Wilma [Meikle] came—unhappy and oddly reticent. Ought to be writing again. Will there ever be a chance?

4 August 1916

Arrived Holmwood [Surrey]—John. A month of sleep and fine air & sufficient food have increased his beauty past recognition. I never knew how

[12] Wilma Meikle, writer and suffragist. Author of *Towards a Sane Feminism*, see 22 November 1916. Since the autumn of 1915 she has been living as "housekeeper-companion" of her friend the British author Rebecca West whose study of Henry James she may have recommended to Butts. Carl Rollyson, *Rebecca West: A Saga of the Century* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), 43. West is involved in a "free love" relationship with the married British writer H. G. Wells. Meikle, whom Wells dislikes, is clearly caught up in this difficult relationship.

[13] Hendersons, also known as "The Bomb Shop," was a political bookshop and publisher at 66 Charing Cross Road. Works published by Hendersons include Miles Malleson's 1916 pamphlet *Cranks and Commonsense*, a defence of Conscientious Objectors, with an introduction by Philip Morrell.

[14] Buying a book by the journalist and pacifist Edmund Dene Morel (1873–1924) would understandably have led Butts to think of his close friend Roger Casement, who was executed for high treason on that day for his involvement in Irish Easter Rebellion of 1916.

beautiful he was before, now he's brown with haymaking, supple with swimming & dear past understanding. I'm only beginning to find out all that Eleanor has done. It's worse than I thought—like a filthy word shrieked across fine music, Chopin or Debussy. And I can't just condemn or cut her out. [Off to] Salterns Tuesday.[15] Supper at Trevelyans.' Haymaking, [reading] Jane Austen. Walked back with John along the road with cypresses & stars.

5 August 1916

Read Bertrand Russell all morning, wrote, ate apples—applied more work NCCL [National Council for Civil Liberties]. 2 o'clock met John. Walked to Dorking. Told each other classic stories. Tea & Home in evening, told our confessions with as few lies as possible. He is far more truthful intellectually than I. Or perhaps he is only better at saying what he thinks. Supper together, went over to Trevelyans.' [Austen's] *Emma* & peace. Then a policeman to see registration cards, especially John's. Mrs Trevelyan saved us all, engaging him in light conversation. Card given back without comment. More *Emma* to sooth our nerves. Tried to appear "calm and well-bred." Doubtful success. Walked home with him along the cypress road. All well. We stood together at the door. I was holding a candle in a brass candlestick looking at J & feeling for the bolts. He said "Psyche looking for Cupid" & I "this Psyche has found her Cupid, and will never let him go." Then we both knew. "Eros, Eros—"

6 August 1916

Read all morning on the hill. Continued story. John afternoon. Supper with Trevelyans. John had a hump. I let him be. 'The' question discussed [marriage]. Books. Hellas. Race home in the dark over the hill. Uncertain.

[15] Salterns and its surrounding Dorset landscape are central to Butts's imagination. See Introduction. She wrote to a friend in 1923 after Salterns was sold at auction: "Well, there were a great many things there that my father had given me—of little value, but which would last for ever, things I wanted for Camilla [Butts's daughter], more especially since she will never see the place now. It was a very beautiful place. My father had meant it for me—gave it me when I was a child. Then Tony was born just before he died, and you know the English law about the son. So I've been disinherited for Tony." Butts to Glenway Wescott, 8 August 1923, Wescott papers.

7 August 1916

John early in morning. Walk round the Roman Camp. The fallen tree, wood, the joy. Sealed boxes. Lunch together. Then further discussion. Sonia [Cohen], then the real trouble—Finances.[16] The stile overlooking the Weald. All I can ever say is an approximation of this. I tried to keep my head as clear as my heart. Understand John as well as persuade him. I hardly knew myself whether I was a wise angel with a sword, or a devil out of hell tempting him. I want us to try it for a year or so, to give us both a chance to work & love in peace, & poverty mitigated by a certain security. He has starved & fretted long enough. He knows that but because I am his lover—I think that he will accept me now.[17] When we had come to the decision a great joy liberated us both. But he can never claim that he proposed to me. . . . Back to London. Eleanor very bitter but sorry later. All well.

8 August 1916 [Salterns, Dorset, Butts's birthplace]

I can see very little but John's face as he sat on the stile & looked across the weald, pale, & far-seeing, & uncertain, & bitter—as he came to me. Down in the field later we picked corn—wheat—& he winnowed it in his hand, & we ate it together. "Sub regno Cynarae" [Horace, *Odes*].

It is hard for both of us not to look continually behind & before. We must accept each hour for itself. There is also the way of Lao, & better things than even the reign of Cynara, and harder. Packed. Eleanor very uncertain.

Salterns very brilliant with silver and flowers & all lovely things—My room adorned.

M[other] very awkward, hugged her in the dark picture room.[18] Eleanor happier, Tony* [brother, Anthony Butts] most dear.

[16] Sonia Cohen (1895–1987), Jewish actress and dancer. Previous lover of John Rodker, and mother of their child Joan, born 1914. See 1918, note 10.

[17] The recent consummation of Butts's and Rodker's relationship suggests that they have not known one another long. Certainly Isaac Rosenberg thinks that Rodker and Sonia Cohen (they had pretended to be married although they were not) are still together in June 1916. See Rosenberg's letter cited in note 8.

[18] Mary Colville-Hyde, née Briggs (1863–1944), Butts's mother. Married Captain Frederick Butts in 1889. After his death she married their friend and neighbour Francis Frederick (Freddie) Musgrove Colville-Hyde (186?-1919) in 1907. "MC-H," as

9 August 1916

Mad letter from Wilma [Meikle]. Continued story.

It has done no harm, this year's absence [from Salterns]. It is now possible to look at this place, once my home, with detachment. I don't want to reform them any more. It is possible to shrug one's shoulders & accept, and believe in the good one finds, & know it partial at best, & love all one can. John has drawn some of the power to do this out of me, I think that it was probably there before, but Eleanor always discouraged it, he doesn't—*Caritas—caritas, sed perfecta caritas* [Love, Love, but perfect Love, (ref. to 1 John 4.18?)]—Eleanor wants everyone disfranchised who did not help in the war. Bertrand Russell, the Trevelyans.[19]

10 August 1916

THOUGHT FOR TO-DAY

"When a friendship is dead, do not turn back to look at the corpse."

Morel & *Truth and the War*. Very partial. Went to Purbeck, Littlesea, bathed.

Eleanor & I talked till 1 A.M. Both were unhappy—she also. Then I took her in my arms. Why will none of my friends ever trust me? They leave me when I need them most, & shrug their shoulders when they find I haven't gone to the devil after all.

But perhaps I shall.

12 August 1916

Soldiers to tea—great success—the effort to be decent all round temporarily reconciled the whole lot of us. Met that Staffordshire railwayman, ILP [Independent Labour Party]. NUR [National Union of Railwaymen].

Butts tended to refer to her in her journal, was not adept at managing the family fortune and from the will it does seem that Butts was correct in thinking her mother acted against Captain Butts's wishes with regard to the children's inheritance. She clearly preferred her son Tony to her daughter. For more information see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 13–9.

[19] Eleanor Rogers is voicing the majority view. Articles in *The Times* "'confessed' to 'considerable sympathy' with them [Conscientious Objectors] . . . [yet] thought, using the same argument upon which it has always based its opposition to votes for women, that they ought to be disfranchised." *The Times*, 17 October and 6 July 1916, in Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge*, 123.

13 August 1916

Walk in the wind on Salterns pier. Bathed in a sea which came in shouting. Eleanor very nearly angry then a brick again. Money from John's father would, ethics apart, give us a better chance.

14 August 1916

Indifferent morning, rather cross & unreasonable. Worked at story. Explored round the docks, crossed over the toll-bridge with Eleanor to Hamworthy. There we found a railway yard LSWR [London & South Western Railway] a sloping desolation of trucks & sleepers. We went up & found on the other side a beach with the sea breaking, & all the harbour up to Arne and Ower luminous-grey in the flying sun & wind. We saw Corfe Castle sitting like a black crown on a bright hill.[20]

Went early to bed. On this night we recreated our time of last August. I shall not forget the assent she gave . . .

15 August 1916

Letter from John very worried . . .

Finished new draft of story. Read *The Nation* and Morel. Oversmoked.

16 August 1916

Seedy, but felt that a swim would make me all right again. Lido with Eleanor & Tony. Wild cold bathe. Bournemouth in the afternoon, bought records & cigarettes.

17 August 1916

Very seedy. Idiotic to go bathing with a chill. Read Morel and slept. Knee bad.[21] Everyone awfully decent.

[20] Corfe Castle, Dorset, was, like her nearby birthplace Salterns, one of Butts's magical places. "The world really ends at Corfe Castle—here a new world has begun and pushes out the life man knows that he lives. Here is everything man once made into Gods in the State in which he made them; the crude potency." Butts to Glenway Wescott, S. Egliston Cottage, Kimmeridge, Corfe Castle, Dorset, undated [1923/4], Wescott papers.

[21] On repeated occasions throughout her life Mary Butts suffered from a slight lameness due to an inherited weakness in one knee.

Eleanor & I discussed the new epic—to be written with French brevity. Arnold Bennett's pitch too drab to sustain its occasional ecstacy.[22]

Part I Dad—down to Tony's birth.
Part II TT [Tiger Tiger, Butts's stepfather, Frederick Colville-Hyde]—down to today.[23]
Part III Practically the unlived future. Eleanor will write it I hope.[24]

19 August 1916

I've not opened a book or written a word or done half an hour's clear thinking for days.

22 August 1916

Read Morel—through him back to universal reality again & contemplation beyond fear.

23 August 1916

Morning with Aunts. After lunch went up & thought things out. Eleanor has done me one service, forced me to think out my position with regard to the war. Mere good-will would never have been enough.

24 August 1916

Curse imminent. Read Morel.

It would not be possible to live long anywhere without power to be alone. In solitude everything clarifies, & in doing so becomes inessential again. It is like walking down under the sea, erect, one's chin lifted, one's hands pressed to one's sides. Once more the "sea is kind" [Sturge Moore, "The Sea is Kind"?]

25 August 1916

Wrote to John & Hutchinson.

[22] Enoch Arnold Bennett (1867–1931), British writer of realist novels, many set in his native Midlands.

[23] See note 18.

[24] In fact this is the first, albeit rough, outline of Butts's novel *Ashe of Rings*, named "MVI" until first referred to as "Ashe" on 11 December 1919. See 11 January 1917.

27 August 1916

Avoided church, 'heroic' lie unnecessary.

28 August 1916 London

Free again—not so much the sights that rejoiced me, as the smells. Eleanor adorable. Read Tolstoy "On Life" [in *Essays and Letters*, trans. Maude (1911)]

29 August 1916

Corrected play—sent rest of story to GG.[25] Eleanor came in—made hell, raved, struck me. I'm very tired, Ivan Ivan [John Rodker] come back to me.

Read [Rabindranath] Tagore.

30 August 1916

Eleanor implacable. Finally tackled the bottom flat together. Two policemen, one a Scot & fascinated by Eleanor to help. Roused one girl & thin pale Jewish prostitute. She came out with lank hair streaming & wearing a long fur coat. Her legs were bare with thin pale ankles & little feet. She looked ill, her language if she hadn't feared the police, would have been filthy. ['Lost'] keys finally returned—I could take her side against all the police & Eleanors in the world.[26] Took amber beads, & went West with Eleanor. Tired—both bitter one with the other. I told her I wanted her to go. Now I wonder whether I should have stuck to it. Then, in the Park, she turned adorable again—it's really immediate dread of her packing and going. . . . There is still John on Friday. Eleanor must not be let in to any crisis any more. Remember that night with John.

1 September 1916 [Holmwood, Surrey]

Came down here. John is very good to me.

2 September 1916

Read [Mayne's] *One of Our Grandmothers* [(1916)] & Tolstoy.

[25] Possibly reference to Butts's "Fantasy: A Play in 3 Acts," 3 undated MS notebooks, Butts's papers. The story is unidentified. "GG" may refer to Georgie Greenwood, possibly typing up Butts's MSS. See 1917, note 29.

[26] This incident inspires Mary Butts's story "The Golden Bough" (1923).

3 September 1916

Read [John's] novel through.[27] Erotic, nebulous, in parts a work of genius. Full of cliches with lapses into flamboyancy & bombast, & then irresistible. God help us both. Eleanor's spirit implacable—as I wrote she seized me with memories of past ecstacies transcended. There will have to be a secret MS seeing that no one can write openly of these things.

4 September 1916

Wrote "Fantasia from an unwritten novel" [unidentified].[28]

John made love to me. Tonight he shewed me that I have vital significance for him, more than I imagined. His eyes sparkled & lit mine too, & our kisses were heady, & all things seemed feasible.

5 September 1916

Wrote the "Fantasia." Uncertain as to climax—damnable state.

John came. Nothing can spoil what we have between us.

6 September 1916

Read [Backhouse and Bland's] *Annals and Memories of the Court of Peking from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* [(1914)]. Cooked. Went on with "Fantasia"—doubtful success—I want John's sure touch.

7 September 1916

Tribunal. There was 'Bangles' [unidentified] again. Brown, elegant, and still to my mind captivating. These last two adjectives once both feminine. There is still the old touch, defiant, humorous, a little tired, &, in some odd way, pleading. He did not see me, & I'm not sorry now that I'm to have no friends. (It is stupid to write sentences like the last. They are too true—& not true enough. I'm a fool.) Wrote to Wilma.

Eleanor has quarrelled with her office—sheer inevitable lunacy.

[27]"The Switchback." Never published in England, it is translated into French by the Russian writer and translator Ludmila Savitzky (1881–1957) and published in France as *Les Montagnes Russes* (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1923). Savitzky translates a substantial number of Modernist texts including Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Butts meets Savitzky in 1928/9 as she is Mireille Havet's godmother.

[28]"Fantasia." This is a title which appeals to Butts as two years later (in July 1918) she begins "Fantasia," a "sketch for development of greek 'nameless' personalities in modern mysticism." As far as I know, both remain unpublished.

Our parting is inevitable, she'll hate me again soon enough, & blind herself & I shall get angry . . . All the time I love her, & ache for her peace, & her loveliness in my arms. I soothed her for to-day's trouble, but not quite sincerely—Perhaps I'm crazed over salvation by unanimist love, but I get hot when she talks of revenge, & her eternal "getting even." [29]

Letter from John.

9 September 1916

"Fantasia" no good.

Read *Annals and Memories of Court of Peking*. "Hatch-End & Pinner" saved the day.[30] The pain & questioning of the war intolerable—Late talk with Eleanor—The Prussian in our midst—the one way out—a deadness somewhere in my heart, an intense discomfort. I long for different faces—rags [dancing, parties], Soho, the Cafe . . .

10 September 1916

Walk with Eleanor. Chocolate & peace. After lunch—she lay back on the sofa, against the violet cover & the emerald cushion. Her skin was honey & scarlet, her shirt the colour of pale wine, & she wore two roses crimson & purple . . . & by colour was accomplished our seduction.

In the evening went to Gwen [Ingram]'s.

In the 'bus coming home met the soldier with the bitter grievances.

Very seedy that night.

11 September 1916

Good letter from John—but the helplessness of us all. It may drag on for years, & our best days be spoiled because of her. Went to Prom. There were Miles Malleson, [Gilbert] Cannan, [Harold?] Rubinstein, Wagner soared & thundered, & I stood away from them sick for all that I have missed.[31]

[29] French poetic movement (c. 1908–11) created by Jules Romain, perhaps inspired by Walt Whitman's concept of universal brotherhood. Its didactic purpose was to reveal the soul of the collective society.

[30] Perhaps reference to anecdote by or visit to Wilma Meikle, who is then living with Rebecca West at Alderton, Royston Park Road, *Hatch End, Pinner*, London.

[31] For information about the playwright Miles Malleson see 24 November 1916. Gilbert Cannan (1884–1955), British playwright and novelist. Conscientious Objector during the war who (like Rodker) accepted to do work of national importance in-

12 September 1916

[Bernard] Langdon-Davies—another Bangles with more purpose and finer intelligence.[32] Arranged for work under Mr [Raymond] Postgate.[33] Shifted John's things, an epic undertaking.

Read Tolstoy's *The Russian Revolution* [trans. Maude (1907)] and Kropotkin's *Russian Literature* [(1905)]—also Herrick.

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stead of military service. Secretary of the NCCL. Butts would have seen him at NCCL meetings. There are several references to "round the corner" in 1916, perhaps a reference to Cannan's 1913 novel of that name. In addition to *Mendel* (1916), Cannan "wrote a series of novels involving this milieu [of the NCCL: *Pugs and Peacocks* (1921), *Sembal* (1922), *House of Prophecy* (1924)] in which one of the central characters, Melian Stokes, is a fictionalised portrait of [Bertrand] Russell." Patterson, 1997. "Cultural Critique and Canon Formation 1910–1937: A Study in Cultural Memory," Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 20. "Rubenstein" may refer to the pianist Artur Rubinstein but is probably Harold Frederick Rubinstein, British solicitor, Fabian, and playwright.

[32] Bernard Noel Langdon-Davies (1872–1952), socialist, publisher, lecturer on international affairs, staff member of the Union of Democratic Control. When conscription was imminent he "organised for the National Council for Civil Liberties to stand behind the No Conscription Fellowship as a constitutional body," and became the chairman of the NCCL. Unlike Rodker, he was able to remain in London as a Conscientious Objector because his work of national importance was "Assistant Doughmaker at the Bermondsy Co-operative Bakery." He later wrote that "It was quite frankly a fake. I went as a rule at night to the bakery and worked for anything up to four hours. All day I was at my office working for the Council [NCCL]. At weekends I was anywhere in the country making speeches. I took no wages from the bakery and am afraid I learned only the more humdrum portions of the art of baking. . . . I felt it only consistent never to interrupt my work, public or private, against conscription and war." On a more general note he added: "there were several really serious features in being a pacifist during the war, apart from the general difficulties, intellectual, moral and physical, of the propaganda. One was the clean sweep of all one's friends except the very few who were more or less of the same views; another was the association almost exclusively with people who were in deadly earnst, angry and plunged in gloom. . . . It was difficult to keep robust and cheerful, yet the basing of one's views and actions on reason instead of on mysticism and emotion made it possible and that, I hope, occasionally penetrated the gloom of others." "Alternative Service," in *We Did Not Fight*, 193, 185–6.

[33] From this entry and others (see 31 October and 7, 14, 21 November 1916) it seems that the NCCL held weekly meetings on Tuesday evenings, perhaps to plan the policy carried out during office hours. Raymond Postgate (1896–1971), journalist, author on labour and radical history, founder of Communist Party in Great Britain. He was one of the first Conscientious Objectors in 1916 and worked for the NCCL in 1916.

14 September 1916

Office, getting hold of the work.

Mr Postgate.

John, peace again, but I'm not easy, the work there is turning me cool & practical again & with that comes detachment . . .

Evening, peace at first, then an incredible attack—comic idiocy if it were not so unbearable. She may have looked at this—her look out anyhow, & for the future it stays locked up.

But she should not do it, it is all hell for me—It's lonely, & I've no one really, no one could be much lonelier, but there was always her love, for two years I suppose I've lived in possession of the non-existent.

Too tired to judge anything clearly.

15 September 1916

Peace this morning—bath this morning with paper & a cigarette, then a morning's infinite leisure. If it were not for her odd tenderness & flashes of wisdom, I think [Eleanor] would be a creature of sheer terror, a kind of new Medusa whose naked inhumanity turned people to stone. And all the time she's crying inarticulately for the love she denies, the consideration she never gives. I do not understand, but I love her. All the morning to write & think in. The work is good, there's a classic touch about it—it's citizen's work "labour for all those things which make men better in their cities," a barrier against barbarism & the home-sickness for the mind. Pericles would approve it, Herodotus & Plato, so one need not be ashamed to look one's masters in the face. "And freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to accident [precedent]" [Tennyson, "You ask me, why"].

17 September 1916

Everything down to the last & worst came up [in Surrey], orderly, inevitable, a series of calm, desolate waves & overwhelmed us. I know now that John has no use for my life, that he fears me & that Sonia is only a half excuse.

Eleanor was very good to me. There is still the Chinese proverb—"Thank goodness the worst has happened."

18 September 1916

[NCCL] Office, chance of permanent work.[34]
Books at Mudies.[35] Too busy to think.

Not till the end of the war will there be any time for art or love or magic again. Perhaps never again.

21 September 1916

Office, found it hard. Played with Tony [Butts], read Niven's *Two Generations* [(1916)]. The evening was bad, we went to [Brighouse's] *Hobson's Choice* [(1915)], an ironic comment on John's relations & mine.[36] The supper & the delicate food were all one could remember with pleasure.

22 September 1916

Read Rebecca West's *Henry James* (1916). Beginning to develop a finer feeling for the work.

Tea with Tony [Butts] at the Blue Cockatoo. Tony nearer again, more intimate. Now I can send him paper clips & cash with meticulous care, where before I sent him fire & ecstacies. He very sensibly likes that best.

27 September 1916

Wrote [to] Hutchinson.

28 September 1916

Office, peace—read Madge Mears's *Sheltered Sex* [(1916)].

29 September 1916

Tried to buy hat. Dismal failure, ghastly day. Don't much care if I don't get that job.[37] Didn't get report on Industrial Conscription. 'Prom' in the evening. Liszt Concerto no 2. Mossivitch played.

[34] For a more detailed description of the NCCL office, off Fleet Street, see 14 November 1916 and Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 4–5.

[35] Mudies, Select Library (i.e. bookshop), 30 New Oxford Street, near the British Museum.

[36] In *Hobson's Choice* Maggie Hobson successfully overcomes her father's prejudice against her marriage to the working-class Will Mossop. In Butts's and Rodker's case, difference in class between their two families was further complicated by the fact that Rodker was Jewish.

[37] Perhaps reference to "permanent work" on 18 September.

30 September 1916

Tired with office work.

Eleanor adorable. Do I want it? Yes, but am afraid of its dominating me again, so not at ease. But I'm freer than I've ever been. Dionysos keep me so, & the winged Eros keep me her true lover. O damn this egoism in love.

But I belong to my work, & in her way she is my staff & my consolation.

2 October 1916

Met John for lunch [in Surrey]. Afterwards we curled up together on the sofa, & the dark crept in all round us, & covered us but for the light of the fire. Then came the memorable hour, alien from frank love & comradeship & passion & community of interest, & all that make up our normal relations. We turned a corner in space, & saw when we seek in each other, the hidden soul. At least I saw or rather divined, I doubt if John did. What I saw was not him, only a fresh unnamed relationship in being, an unspeakable thing. Therein lies our justification, if we want such a makeshift. It was past him, but I saw him also, & his need of me. It left me grim but beatific. Then he went. Eleanor returned, hellish. I went out & walked a long time in the dark. And I flaunted the great illumination I had, & she raved & screamed & struck my breast, & tore at my eyes & hair.

4 October 1916

Eleanor as ever, but there came a letter from John that made one sing. [Notes the following titles:] *The Celestial Omnibus* Forster [(1911)], *The Chorus: A tale of Love and Folly* [(1915) by Sylvia] Lynd.

6 October 1916

At Tea there were exciting cakes and we went to Gwen [Ingram]'s and sealed our peace over those two hats. Does our peace coincide with hats? It made us forget the war.

Revised the "Nostalgie" [unidentified]—these days I've no lightness of touch.

New poems.

7 October 1916

There was a letter from John & an Aubade—not bad, erotic, formless, with a certain sophisticated fierce loneliness of its own. The loneliness is

piling up. I'm glad, I'm having my share of the war at last. I lay alone & read Gissing's *By the Ionian Sea* [(1901)]. That finished it. I could have died for that immortal world.

8 October 1916

Peace with Eleanor, a pregnant hollow desirable antiphon. Read Tolstoy's *Twenty-Three Tales* [trans. Maude (1906)]

9 October 1916

A very perfect morning, all wind & sun. At Charing X, a via dolorosa focused by the quiet infinitely skilful RAMC [Royal Army Medical Corps] drivers. The cars passed like a procession of ghosts; even the crowd was silent, Charing X in a tortured dream. Those men changed gears with no more than a click. The women threw them flowers, but the men made no sign.

10 October 1916

[Thomas Browne's] *Religio Medici* an excellent book. Its subtle detachment & odd classicism—last fruit of the Renaissance—is balm now. At the office talked about the 4th dimension. Mr Francis [unidentified] interesting. He holds that all our consciousnesses are piercing into this new dimension. As a matter of fact, mine is. We went out, & there was a high moon & wind, & light fast-travelling clouds. On the pavement off the Fulham Rd waiting for a 31 Bus I nearly came through. Letter from John.

Saw Nevinson's pictures.[38]

11 October 1916

"Making of a CO" returned. Eleanor adorable. "Think how often it'll happen again," she said & cheered me. Talked about the war, first time for months. Our disagreements fierce as ever. Still, Peace Egg.

12 October 1916

Office, Women's Committee. Langdon Davies, Mr Postgate & fiancée [Daisy Lansbury]!

[38] Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson (1889–1946), British artist. Invalided out of the army in January 1916. His exhibition at the Leicester Galleries from September 1916 is a great success and leads to his being commissioned as one of Britain's

At tea talked about the collective insanity that has come over the world. Mr Francis argued that no one was sane now, pacifist or 'patriot.' One demurs at that, rallying to one's pack. He's right—our attitude may be sane, but our expression of it is apt to be blurred with tears & railings. I'm over the edge at a word with hot eyes, & exaltation or a sickness in my stomach, an infinite nostalgie. Stimulus—stimulus—& there is none. Eleanor denies it me, right and left. The life breaks through in other ways, painful slow ways & I want draughts of sunlight & exultation.

I'm nearly twenty-six & I've done nothing, except write 26 in letters so that future readers of this shall not deplore my style.

There's a book to be written on the war—how can the threads come together. The growing madness, the terrifying weak places in one's soul when the pacifist becomes Jingo, & the Jingo is afraid. The reeling civilisation, the ethical revolt, the revival of magic, & thwarted agonies of 'unanimiste' love. O Eleanor, the time may come when you will play Ismene to my Antigone.[39] But I shall never play Antigone, I say I'm too ironic, but truly I haven't the guts.

13 October 1916

It is left to Gilbert Cannan to write the novels I should write.[40]

15 October 1916

Bathed, perfumed, did Muller [Swedish exercises for women], polished my nails. Stretched out in a deep chair opposite a fire, a box of fine cigarettes, & the *Religio Medici* of Sir Thomas Browne, a short way into the terrestial paradise. Read *Non-Combatants* [(1916) by Rose Macaulay] &

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first official war artists. Butts may well have met Nevinson through Rodker, since they are friends. One of the founder members of the London Group.

[39] In Sophocles' play *Antigone*, when Antigone defies King Creon's orders by administering her brother's funeral rites, she is condemned to be buried alive. Her sister Ismene, who had refused to join in Antigone's crime, nevertheless begs to be allowed to share her punishment. However, she is dismissed as demented.

[40] Probably a reference to Cannan's novel *Mendel* (1916). Cannan "had contacts in Whitechapel, loved the Yiddish theatre, and approved of many aspects of life in the East End." John Woodeson, *Mark Gertler: Biography of a Painter, 1891–1939* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972),117. *Mendel* is set in the Yiddish East End of London and based on the life of the Jewish painter Mark Gertler (a friend of Rodker). Mendel was Mark Gertler's Yiddish name.

Garin [(1915)] by Mary Johnston. The last a shocking poor book for the author of *The Witch* [(1914)].[41]

A new book out of Eleanor, a study in the growing madness of a tortured world. The war in another aspect—no day is wasted in which comes such an idea.[42]

16 October 1916

Went to John [in Surrey]. Thought out novel [*Ashe of Rings*] in train. To begin writing at once, or wait & let it simmer? John at the first station with his hair like a pale flame. To-day we turned a corner outside space, but were lovers, & our intimacy perfect & human.

17 October 1916

Commission on VD [Venereal Disease] pamphlet shaping.

18 October 1916

Went to *Chu Chin Chow*.[43] Read Tchekov. *Chu Chin* all big chances, nine tenths missed.

19 October 1916

Langdon Davies pleases me while I half see through [him]. He strokes all my sore places. There, with the heads of the show, I know myself among equals, potentially I'm one with them. Where shall I be in ten years? How irony—growing, struggles with naivety—declining—one hopes—within me.

20 October 1916

Economy! don't leave a line between entries. Bought two pairs black shiny stockings, one pair grey, fine silk, one white with black stripes, one thick white wool with checks, one emerald green.

Paid for Joan [Rodker's baby daughter].

[41] Mary Johnston (1870–1936), American novelist and essayist. Wrote historical romances of colonial Virginia, social criticism, and mysticism. *Garin* is a historical novel with elements of a mystic quest set in the time of Richard the Lionheart.

[42] Reference to Butts's novel *Ashe of Rings* (1925).

[43] Frederic Norton's show at His Majesty's Theatre, London. Songs included "Any time's kissing time" and "Cobbler's Song." It opened on the 31 August 1916 and ran until 22 July 1921.

The war like a monstrous inconvenience in every room of the house—a wall crawling with deadly caterpillars which sometimes drop off & go for one.

One goes on living in the middle.

Frieze-figures "doing our bit" even in pacifism.

A room with a snake in it, always liable to turn up. "Professional consolers."

The horror of the monstrosity its essential irrelevance.

Read Tchekov—a focus for the dreariness of life.

Went to Hutchinson.

Difference between John's mind & mine. He sees a girl standing on say—a kerb, & notices the "impossible brilliance" of lipsalve, & writes a poem. I'd want to know where she'd come from, & what she thought about it all. So I'm likely to be the poorer artist, unless I can walk through the mirror of understanding & out into the garden beyond.

21 October 1916

Began the novel [*Ashe of Rings*]. Frieze effect uncertain.

23 October 1916

Now comes what can never be told. Each time it comes new. Unique life, common perhaps to all, but unique to oneself.‡[44] Power, a 'loud shameless' laughter, & a sense of infinite well being—I did not need to look at John's face or want his body on mine. He was there. I kissed Eleanor, & left them together, & we waved cigarettes on the crest of Leith hill. A light strong wind blew up from the Weald which was grey & pierced with silver light. A wind brings these times. Perhaps the wind has an existence outside time & space. I know I have & John. Why don't these times come oftener? "As the sun at noon-day to illustrate all shadows, as the sheaves at harvest to fulfil all penuries" [Donne, "Sermon II Preached at Paul's upon Christmas Day in the Evening"].

‡I first wrote 'love'—unconsciously.

What is it that happens? On the way back in the train a cloud blew up & scattered itself in a shower. The air was like April. In fact, it was April, just as good, & with the same rare sensations. What matters is this—it is

[44] Butts makes a number of marginal comments in her journal. These are noted by a double-dagger (‡) and appear as smaller text adjacent to the journal entries to which they refer.

not that in the spring one thinks of summer or in the autumn of winter, but that shower, dipping in under the sun like a bee marks a transition. It is the transition, the 'rite de passage' that is so wonderful.[45] From anything—to anything. But that high morning was not a 'rite de passage.' What was it? A culmination, an ecstacy, & illumination. Transition, a rite. In the novel—the girl's series of transitions, rites de passage—but the ecstacy won't come off—not to last. Anyhow the white magic has won again. How to get that book "round the corner" [title of Cannan's 1913 novel]. Plato's forms again—immortal ideas. Something the girl wants, but not an artist, or a mystic, or a nun.

26 October 1916

Still no letter from John. Very sick. Office flat.

Wrote a Kensington reverie [unidentified]. I want hot gross vital things, & people who lust but do not fight, artists & singers, & dealers in oriental stuff, not swaggering cubs but large subtle avid people, & cocottes, & drinks & thick smoke, & scent, & sweat & "cheese & macaroons & beer."

27 October 1916

Office, lunch with Ray Postgate. Shaw in the evening [lecture on "Life,"] growing [into] a kind garrulous old fool. His inspiration's passing. . . . [but] good in bits.[46]

29 October 1916

Middleton Murry on Dostoevsky [*Fyodor Dostoevsky: A Critical Study* (1916)].[47]

[45]"Rite de passage," a significant term for Butts and the title of one of her poems. See 27 April 1926.

[46] The first of that year's Fabian lectures, given at King's Hall, Covent Garden. The Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) intended to speak about "how far the sacrifice of liberty to the emergencies created by war is really necessary." In fact he "spoke mainly about biology, theology, and the super-man or super-Prospero, Zeppelins, Plato, poverty, the intelligent parent, and—himself." "Mr. Bernard Shaw's Lecture on Life," *Christian Commonwealth* (1 November 1916), in Stanley Weintraub, *Bernard Shaw 1914–1918: Journey to Heartbreak* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 189. Shaw's attack on the British class-system, *Heartbreak House: A Fantasia in the Russian Manner on English Themes* (1919) greatly influences Butts.

[47] John Middleton Murry (1889–1957), British literary critic, editor and writer. Editor of *The Athenaeum*. Married Katherine Mansfield in 1918.

Can it be like this? If his work is to be compared to a "power in the fourth dimension functioning in the third." Why did that escape into timelessness break him so? His reactions, all to the most sensual. Was that why? One can function outside time & be filled with luminous peace & ecstacy beyond expression.

Life is more than love—but may not love be that which can illuminate all these destroying terrors? Not sex love qua sex love of course. This seems too much on the surface. What is Dostoevsky's question? That "truth, & goodness, & beauty" are only a tiny fragment of reality. They are continually thrust aside—he chose Christ but had more than a belief that Christ was "outside the truth." These powers, inimical to man's life, are they absolutely evil? Not of necessity, there may be no such thing. But, whether of their own volition or no, they will destroy man. But not if we are philosophers. Was Dostoevsky merely the reaction from the commonplace positivist & reformer, cursed obvious optimists? ‡ ‡Get some occult books.

Vana living (unconscious or not?) in a further dimension.
Judy straining unconsciously, & relapsing into sheer materialism.[48]

Man's will—what might it not create left to itself? Dostoevsky's fear. He was not free enough, his mind was independent to a certain extent, but he could neither act nor be a free man. A corollary. All things are lawful. Evil may be as good as good & better. To be re-christened good. But a dimension further there is neither. It's the success that matters. Back to the positivists again?

Where, all the time is sophrosynê?[49]

What is lacking in Dostoevsky?

Any sure sense of evolution . . . But evolution exists in time, presupposes time & durée.

It may be that there is 'timelessness' with its powers, elements & awful destroying spirits. It might be that time has happened for us, or that we have become conscious of it as a medium whereby in which we men can create forms of beauty & order which in some way are cosmic & destroyers of chaos outside time. At least we are creating a medium in which we can live & function, & which will sustain us when we pass gradually to our next dimension. But to Dostoevsky—this was sheer terror & an-

[48] Notes on the female protagonists of Butts's *Ashe of Rings*. See Introduction.
[49] See 26 October 1917.

nihilation & agony. Perhaps he halted before the discovery into which we are half-born.

30 October 1916

Read Middleton Murry's book, & *Windmills: A Book of Fables* [(1915)] by Cannan & book on the state regulation of disease.

1 November 1916

Last night's meeting good for the perfection of Lowes Dickinson's form, even apart from its content.[50]

The unspeakable vulgarity of this war. In these days I am living as it were partially outside of time.

Late tonight I went up to Eleanor's room. I had been meaning to write, but instead I yielded & flung myself naked into her bed & lay over her, & clipped her between my thighs, & rested my chin on her pillow in the dark. Then we talked, not of green velvet abominations called hats, but of life & death & timelessness, & fear & harmony, & of all things which rise up within or beat upon the soul. Very close we were to each other, two wandering & immortal spirits brought together into one bed. We spoke of the Fear also, & if it must come.

2 November 1916

Office.

It would be interesting to know if I am becoming ever so remotely a living woman to Lowes Dickinson. But, maybe, it is only his cleverness . . .

5 November 1916

Pyjamas, peace, Clarissa Club.[51] Estelle [unidentified] & Phyllis [Reid] to supper. [52] Interest in Dostoevsky etc. in abeyance for the moment.

[50] For reference to evening meetings see note 33. Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1862–1932), historian, philosophical writer, and lecturer. During the war he is working towards the foundation of a League of Nations and co-authors *Proposals for the Prevention of Future Wars* (1917).

[51] The Clarissa Club, formed before the war by two dancers, Kathleen Dillon and Hester Sainsbury (trained by Margaret Morris), meets in a house at 71 Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, where they experiment with combinations of dance and poetry. Butts may have been introduced to this club—renamed the Choric School by 1914—by Rodker, who attended one of their performances at Glastonbury in 1914. See note

6 November 1916

Problem. How to get my 'lion's share' & not spoil my work. Awful example of Rebecca West.[53]

7 November 1916

Office in the morning.

Meeting in the evening. No success there, brought Phyllis [Reid] home & Margaret Postgate.[54] A noble fiery combination. Very tired.

8 November 1916

THE WORLD BECOMES FORMIDABLE IN PROPORTION AS ONE FEARS IT. Today's great thought.

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to 20 September 1918. Both Pound and Rodker wrote about the Choric School, see note to 3 November 1917 and Crozier, Introduction to John Rodker, *Poems and Adolphe 1920*, ed. Andrew Crozier (Manchester: Carcanet, 1996), xiii–ix. The club's performances would have appealed to Butts for the very reasons that they are excoriated by the conservative scholar Paul Shorey in the 1920s for whom: "Professor [Gilbert] Murray has done much harm by helping to substitute in the minds of an entire generation for Arnold's and Jebb's conception of the serene rationality of the classics the corybantic Hellenism of Miss Harrison and Isadora Duncan [. . .] the higher vaudeville Hellenism of Mr. Vachel Lindsay, the anthropological Hellenism of Sir James Frazer, the irrational, semi-sentimental Polynesian, free-verse and sex-freedom Hellenism of all the gushful geysers of 'rapturous rubbish' about the Greek Spirit." Shorey cited in Patterson, "Cultural critique and canon formation 1910–1937," 69.

[52] Phyllis Reid, school friend of Margaret Postgate, suffragette. Drama student in London during the war where she meets Stella Bowen, then shares a flat with her at Pembroke Studios. Marries an architect, Harry Birnstingl, soon after the war. In 1932 marries Aylmer Vallance, the editor of the *News Chronicle*. Vallance coauthors *These Foreigners* (1937) with Raymond Postgate. Estelle (surname unknown) may well have been a college friend of Reid's, hence dancing in the show Butts goes to on 13 November 1916.

[53] Probably reference to difficulties faced by Rebecca West in trying to pursue her career as a writer and journalist while bringing up her son Anthony, born in 1914, from her long-term (and secret) relationship with H. G. Wells. West later wrote: "It is obvious that during the years spent in childbearing and child-rearing a woman's mastery of whatever artistic or scientific technique she may have acquired is bound to grow rusty." West, "Woman as Artist and Thinker," in *Woman's Coming of Age*, ed. Samuel D. Schmalhausen and V. F. Calverton (New York: Liveright, 1931), 373. This is a very real consideration for Butts, who by 1920 (like Phyllis Reid and Margaret Postgate) is married with a baby daughter. See also note 61.

[54] Margaret (Mop) Isabel Postgate (1893–1980), Fabian, feminist, and activist in the peace movement during the war. In 1918 she marries George Cole (1889–1959), also a CO in 1916.

9 November 1916

Went to MB-M's, met Helen again. O Falstaff![55]

11 November 1916

Met the Eton train. No Tony [Butts, then sixteen years old, and a pupil at Eton]. Rested all the afternoon. It was so comfortable that I nearly forgave everyone for everything.

12 November 1916

Went to John [Rodker] & found the love I want.

13 November 1916

I try & persuade myself that John's love will endure. It won't, it shouldn't, but I want it to so much. Sometimes Eleanor is less important than a needle's point, sometimes she overshadows me like the sky itself. Both moods significant. MS to *The Smart Set*.[56]

Estelle's show tonight.

14 November 1916

The [NCCL] office in the evening is like a series of opening caves, each gleaming with a fire & suspended stars of electric light. Outside the city roars like all the seas & forests of the world. One treads lightly stepping through, & makes straight for the fire as though to safety. Outside in Bride Passage it is very dark, & the roar breaks up into shufflings & shoutings & squallings. Inside is security, stillness, light, & grave people

[55] "MB-M:" probably the initials of the Margaret McClintock, née Buxton, a Westfield College friend of Butts. "Helen:" perhaps Helen Rowe. Butts's exclamation "O Falstaff!" (Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, Part II) may point to Helen's dismissal of her when she hoped for friendship. But see 16 December 1919.

[56] It is unclear which MS Butts sends to *The Smart Set* (an American journal edited by H. L. Mencken and George Nathan). One of *The Smart Set*'s dubious distinctions was that "between 1914 and 1918 it never printed a single line about the war," as both editors "in varying degrees, were sympathetic to Germany." Thomas Quinn Curtis, *The Smart Set: Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken* (N.Y.: Applause, 1998), 116, 117. Given Butts's political commitment in 1916, it is unlikely that the MS would have been apolitical or ignoring the war. It may well be the rejection by *The Smart Set* of this MS which she notes below on 5 January 1917.

intent on their work. The noise of the typewriter is subdued to the squeaking of a mouse. The office is warm. It is good to be there, walking from one room to another cigarette in hand, fountain pen in mouth.

15 November 1916

Letter from Curtis Browne seemed to sanctify the business.[57] Out on the Embankment in the wind. Dinner, "Vanity Fair," supper, peace.[58] Then as we crossed the square in the moonlight, John ran down the dark steps & out of the shadow, across the road to meet us.[59] I knew Eleanor would not meet that test. It was amazingly difficult. She made a few efforts, raved, collapsed, went out of the house. I did not let him stay. That I owed her, but my self-respect will never recover from it. One does not easily tolerate a world where one must drive the desolate from one's door. John was good to me. I think he understood. Eleanor came back!

John & I were so happy together that I came most miraculously alive again. But he has to rough it in the cold, & the warmth here I cannot share with him. It is utterly damnable. He was awfully generous about "Unborn Gods" ["Dangerous."] I half-expected him to sniff & applied tactless jam.

20 November 1916

I'm tired—I've a vision of a place of my own, a studio with grey walls & black woodwork, & flowing hangings, & emptiness & peace & kind friends, & no evil voice with an edge on it cutting my spirit to pieces. And a slim radiant glorious girl to come & fold me away, & laugh me into unimaginable peace, a fountain of wise counsel, & understanding. That is a vain lovely dream. It's dead—don't you hear you fool—dead.

[57] From his stamp on the typescript it is clear that Curtis Browne agrees to become the agent for Butts's novel "Dangerous" ("Unborn Gods").

[58] "Vanity Fair" at the Palace Theatre, London. The show runs for 265 performances between 6 November 1916 and June 1917. Butts sees the show again on 30 January 1917.

[59] Given that Rodker is evading conscription a second time, it is extremely dangerous for him to be in London. His debonair foolhardiness during one of his periods of hiding in London between 1916 and the end of the war is witnessed by Dorothy Richardson. See Richardson to Peggy Kirkaldy, 6 November 1943, Richardson papers.

21 November 1916

Office—bitter beyond belief. All that day—I've told in a poem. "I love my hatred better than my lover" etc.[60] Vauxhall & waning courage, & aching body. John did not fail me. There are times when I believe all good of him. In spite of myself he comforted me. I repudiate that comfort, but desire it not to be spurious more than anything in the world. Phyllis, Stella [Bowen], & Mop [Margaret Postgate] came back after the meeting. Eleanor kind.[61]

22 November 1916

Wrote a poem [unidentified], expressment in both matter & cadence. To tell the truth about one's love, to discover one's cadence. Mine—a mélange of conventional lines fused rather well, & without rhyme. Not good enough.

Washed my hair. Read Wilma [Meikle]'s *Towards a Sane Feminism* [(1916)].[62] Such a book renews one's courage more than wine.

23 November 1916

Office.

John, [I] climbed up out of that window on to the roof. His idea, my execution. I have never been comforted as he comforts me. Technical talk—I was his pupil, & we discovered each other.

I believe that in some sort of way I am arriving. I was certainly the attraction that night—as at Marjorie's [unidentified] before. It was good, keen minds and open, free discussion, & a sense, on my part, of power. Life flowered for me, delicately like a strong garden flower in spring, my skin is marvellously better, my mind was tranquil, ardent, & very clear. I pleased—I may even have convinced.

[60] Line from Butts's untitled poem, which is clearly inspired by her secret affair with Rodker at this time: "To night I go / To find my lover where he hides. / Yet he is in every street / A quiet menace." Untitled, undated TS Poem, Butts papers.

[61] Stella Bowen (1895–1947), Australian painter. Meets Butts when both working on Children's Care Committee in London during the war. Shares a flat with Phyllis Reid. Becomes Ford Madox Ford's lover towards the end of the war. Their daughter is born within a few weeks of Butts's daughter, Camilla. See 1917 note 37.

[62] See Introduction.

24 November 1916

Worked at that poem to its vast improvement.

John is quite right. "You should make good poems out of all that Eleanor has done to you." I shall—but not out of the joy I had [with] her—or that only as an auxiliary—but out of the bitter grief & wrong. Oh Life! Took her out to Kew, walked to Richmond along the towing path. I have never seen a day more beautiful, the sheen on the river, brimming banks & strong current. The tree trunks, great stable growing things at a right angle from the soil—woods—woods, O daimons.[63]

[From] Hendersons' [bookshop]: [Malleson's] *Black 'Ell* [(1916)].[64] [Poems by] Flecker. [Andreyev's] *The Red Laugh* [trans. Linden (1905)]. Dinner at Savoyard. Peace. Walked home under the stars.

I loved his skin, & thought of my new novel, my work & his. Resolved to note everything down—exactly, finding it difficult.

Difference between Slavonic & British mental outlook? Not decided. Latter more objective, but that does not go far. The former more 'outside time'? Sore at leaving him. Worked Eleanor over that night. Her conversion—a momentous business. Bless God for Miles Malleson.

26 November 1916

Office all day, furious work. Read the Malleson plays at lunch, tried to sense their treatment of war in relation to [Andreyev's] *The Red Laugh*. All that happened in one is implied in the other & in the latter the people, the social background are not noted. It might have happened in any place, almost in any time. Abstracted horror, adventures of the soul.

Then the news about the baby—sick fear—re. union, forced, unnatural between John & Sonia [Cohen].

[63] For daimon, see Glossary.

[64] William Miles Malleson (1888–1969), British playwright. Ex-combatant and socialist, he wrote *Black 'Ell* in the early summer of 1916 and it was printed shortly afterwards. Butts was lucky to buy a copy as (together with Malleson's earlier play '*D*' *Company*, written in late 1914, first performed on 10 February 1917), it was destroyed under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) by government order because the Secretary for War believed they constituted "deliberate calumny on the British soldier." *Black 'Ell* (first performed on 21 June 1916) is "a strong, biting attack on the stupidity of war." Stephen Murray, *English War Plays of the First World War*, *http://www.uas.mx/Departamentos/publicciones/TEXTOS/warplay.html*. Malleson was a friend of the writer Gilbert Cannan. Both attended NCCL meetings.

Where we see heroes, triumphing over bodily agony, Russia sees madmen accepting their lunacy & calling it good.

30 November 1916

What am I in relation to John? Less than a mistress, more than a friend.

Last night, as [Eleanor] read [Mew's] "Madeleine in Church" [1916]—I was overcome with my own unworthiness to be near one who had suffered so.[65] To-day an obsession it is hard to face.

What shall I achieve after all? There are times when I am wholly confident in the destiny of Mary Butts. There are others when I find that I am

Superficial
Cowardly
Facing-both-Ways
Receptive & quick to see relations, but not Creative.

On the quarters of my own code, I should kick Eleanor out. I won't get so deeply committed with John, marriage or no. My relations with him are not so devastating—that makes them jolly. Jolly is what they are, quickening, stimulating. But I don't believe that my mate is born, or the mates for women like me. This is not Suffrage.

Read Shaw's *Perfect Wagnerite*. Wrote the story about the books, worked at the poem [both unidentified].

1 December 1916

Thank the Gods for the interlude. Read Havelock Ellis—Ars Amatoria ["The Art of Loving" (1910)].[66] Gods! what fine teaching for husbands & wives.

[65] Eleanor Rogers is one of the few to have a copy of Charlotte Mew's poem after it is published in the collection *The Farmer's Bride* by Harold Monro's imprint, "The Poetry Bookshop," in May 1916 and sold there, as it did not sell well. See Penelope Fitzgerald, *Charlotte Mew and Her Friends* (London: Harvill, 1992), 156. Phyllis Reid occasionally gave readings and performances at The Poetry Bookshop, which Butts may well have attended. See Bowen, *Drawn from the Life* (London: Virago, 1984), 61 and note to 8 December 1918.

[66] Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), an eminent British sexologist. Butts may well also be thinking of Ovid's poem "Ars Amatoria."

2 December 1916

Jack White* ritual.[67] Read [poems by] Anna Wickham [*The Man with a Hammer* (1916)], Havelock [Ellis], etc.

3 December 1916

Read Havelock. Worked in the afternoon. Then to John, & the oldest of consolations. Amber beads in the firelight & in my hair.

Poem [unidentified], first of a new series.

6 December 1916

I am free now to help John all I can, free—in my mind the basis of all freedom. Read [George Moore's] *The Brook Kerith* [(1916)]—a miracle.[68]

[67] Part of Butts's job for the NCCL involves writing to people imprisoned for reasons of conscience. The fact that she calls their correspondence a "ritual" shows the influence White has on her development as a writer. They become close friends; see White's biographical outline.

[68] The publication of George Moore's *The Brook Kerith* in the summer of 1916 was a cause célèbre as it was seen by many as blasphemous because of its fictional portrayal of Christ. The result of the controversy led to its sale of almost five thousand copies in the first month. See Adrian Frazer, *George Moore 1852–1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 42–3.

1917

3 January 1917 [27 Ferncroft Ave, Hampstead]

The love of keeping this diary died. Now I want to recall things again at least events. Just about Dec 13th "Agnes Helen" was accepted.[1] At the same time I found out the loss of the chancery savings.[2]

Went down to Eton to see Tony. Gay. Ice on the trees in Windsor Park. One must never arrange parties for John [Rodker] or his kind, premeditation ruins them. There are times when I damn him for ever for his posing stupidity.

Salterns no good. Tony, his mother's man.

Week end at Pansie's [unidentified]—but she's of the soil now, tho' it may be the beginning of a new hunting . . .

Eleanor very vile at intervals, but saner.

John did not come, but I've worried too often to do so now.

The wisdom of Mrs Kemp [housekeeper]—"And later he would say that you had bought him," also "I bet he had to wash the baby's napkins."

Bergson, [Dostoevsky's] *The Possessed*, more anon.[3]

4 January 1917

No John. On the other hand Jack White turned up, & all went well. Soaked in *The Possessed*. 'Universal' v. 'personal' women. Irritation & contempt for Eleanor, which emotions do not let one cut anything but a contemptible figure. But she had no use for the 'other me.' Bergson the only refuge.

5 January 1917

Letter from John—answered!

I don't believe our life differs so much from that depicted as Russian. Our angle of approach is different, but the events & temperamental

[1] This is unclear—it may be the initial acceptance of Butts's first novel "Dangerous" ("Unborn Gods") by Curtis Browne. See 15 November 1916.

[2] Butts's difficult relationship with her mother is made worse by Mary Colville-Hyde's mismanagement of her children's inheritance.

[3] Butts may well be reading *Creative Evolution* (trans. Mitchell, 1911), a widely influential text by the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941). The archeologist Jane Harrison acknowledges her debt to Bergson in *Themis*. Of particular interest was Bergson's idea of the Life Force (élan vital), a term used by Butts on 20 December 1918 and one which was central to G. B. Shaw's worldview. See A. M. Gibbs, *Heartbreak House: Preludes of Apocalypse* (New York: Twayne, 1994), 6. See also early October 1927.

agonies are much the same. All these days could be written in the Russian mode.

"I'm beastly tired."

John came & it was good.

Eleanor came & made the usual hell.

MS returned—dead to ideas, hope, everything.[4] I can only curl down & hate her, & the mess she is making of my life. Even John's kisses tasted stale & sour . . .

7 January 1917

John said "I'd never keep a diary, I'd have to put down the true nasty things only, & then you might see it & be awfully hurt." We talked about timelessness too. I dressed up, cap & starry earings, powder, a scarlet mouth, low black nightie & over it the sheeny rose-covered gown. No one came—j'ai adoré moi-même.

Wrote to Dan [Ingram], note to John.[5]

Why should I go on hoping that Eleanor will suddenly see, understand it all & change? On no grounds, rational or intuitive whatever.

8 January 1917

Captain [Jack] White. It is not so bad when he is about. We can, at least, compare our bitterness.

11 January 1917

Wrote the murder scene MVI ["Mystica Vannum Iacchos," Virgil, *Georgics*, I, 166].[6] Eleanor came. Then John, then Jack White & Phyllis [Reid] & Stella [Bowen].

[4] Perhaps the rejection of Butts's MS by *Smart Set*. See 13 November 1916.

[5] Dan Ingram, this is probably Gwen Ingram's brother. Possibly her husband.

[6] "Mystica Vannum Iacchos" seems to be Butts's early working title for her novel *Ashe of Rings*. The phrase refers to the winnowing fan of Iacchos. Virgil "calls it mystic because it was carried in the procession of the Eleusinian mysteries, in which Iacchos was the παρεδροσ [lieutenant] of the goddess [Ceres, his mother]." Thomas Keightley, *The Bucolics and Georgics of Virgil* (London: Whittaker & Co, 1847), 162. (A more recent commentary translates "vannus" as "winnowing-basket," explaining that the term "fan" is an older English word for basket in this context. R. A. B. Mynors, ed. Virgil, *Georgics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 35–6.) Virgil's phrase haunts *Ashe of Rings* through the name of the female protagonist Elizabeth *Vanna* Ashe, the self-appointed guardian of the sacred Rings near her home. In the final ver-

Mop [Margaret] Postgate—so other people have these troubles.[7] It is heavenly when one isn't alone.

13 January 1917

Morning at John's.

Again, not-to-be-forgotten. How his mana fights hers [Eleanor's], sometimes compels it.[8] That room with the grey walls, the picures, the painted bowls, the bareness, & US.

Defied Eleanor, very good.

Slept with Eleanor, good, but not so good.

14 January 1917

Tony, Eleanor & I. Sunday too preoccupied with food.

Poem—indifferent.

Phyllis & Stella, no Mop [Postgate]. Tony seedy. A heavy day.

15 January 1917

Conscious again of durée. Painted stuff at Heal's [shop]. Eleanor good, & Tony.

Talk with Tony an incredible mixture of venality & insight. Power in me, as though I were surcharged with electricity. Imminent curse.

The Russian mind.

19 January 1917

Retrospects, our styles, still too amorphous. Office—full of cheer. Knee dubious. Tony's throat bad. Much heart-searching. Eleanor kind. Nothing from Duckworth [Press].[9] Resolutions—my detachment from Eleanor. I found still unshaken.

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sion the "murder scene" was not included. For more information about the novel, see Introduction.

[7] Butts was not alone in having to fight against the restrictive conventionalities of her upbringing. Margaret and Raymond Postgate's father was extremely conservative and patriarchal and vehemently disapproved of his children's Socialism and pacificism (Raymond was a CO). According to Stella Bowen, he eventually disinherited them. See Bowen, *Drawn from Life*, 39, 52–3.

[8] For mana, see Glossary.

[9] Perhaps the press to which "Dangerous" ("Unborn Gods") was sent by Curtis Browne as they were agents for Dorothy Richardson, who was published by Duckworth.

Nina Hamnett, pure Greek, slim as an 'ephebi.'[10] Read *Kama Sutra*.

Blank days. No more rags. Too much dull work, a consciousness that I'm not living fast enough. The last two days have been better. It began on Tuesday night [16 January]. Stella [Bowen] was here, unexpectedly, & Tony. I left them upstairs making up her bed with cloaks & rugs. I went out. It was still cold. The snow was falling. Evening on streets its whiteness seemed to make radiant. I walked about the streets. Suddenly the warm rooms became insignificant, the silent dazzling world significant. I laughed at them, they were less than the stray cats, far less. Then I saw that the falling snow was millions of white silent bees. Bees are the soul. I walked in pure spirit.[11]

I went in, & they had all three shrunk to tiny noisy animals. I didn't notice them much. They saw nothing.

30 January 1917

All the morning I talked with Stella for friendship's sake. Then Tony & I went out to the Palace.

Régine Flory danced.[12] The whole earth became alive in those trumpery notes. I never knew how much a woman I could become—but John knows, possibly Eleanor.

1 February 1917

Eleanor intolerable—but John & I are nearer our heaven.

■ ■ ■

[10] Nina Hamnett (1890–1956), British painter who studied art in London. Briefly married to Roald Kristian. Member of the London Group, with whom she exhibited a painting of Butts which has not been traced. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 448 note 25. Long-term friend of Butts, they spend much time together in France in the twenties. Hamnett is also a witness at Butts's wedding to Gabriel Atkin in 1930. She named her autobiography *Laughing Torso* (1932) after the sculpture Gaudier-Breszka did of her. For ephebi, see Glossary.

[11] This experience inspires a passage in *Ashe of Rings* (1925), which Butts is then writing. See Butts, *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings*, 82.

[12] Régine Flory (1894–1926) actress and dancer. Performed in "Vanity Fair." See note to 15 November 1916.

17 March 1917

It is done now. We move away today week. I can hardly realise my joy. I'm afraid that I shall not be able to rise to the height of my liberty, & my solitude. Has Eleanor spoiled me? Have I wasted these years?

Now it seems that I may have wasted the first in its comparative happiness, but not this last with its hell of disappointment & frustrations. When John came, he made all things new, & the white magic prevails. I want to go 'en retraite' once I'm alone. For 3 days see nobody, prepare myself for a new world—which by the way, I must get to know apart from John. There's a slight rub, no matter, harder things have been done.

Eleanor too is happy, & exceeding amorous . . .

1 April 1917 [1 Glenilla Studios, London NW3]

Moved. Here begins the Vita Nuova. I haven't analysed out the psychology. Eleanor vile at intervals, then most kind. I am exacting with her, torn, run away, & immediately recover. Generally—she bores me. If first, I craved never to see or hear her more, now—I crave John, & solitude, hardly friends or adventures outside, just solitude, & infinite time to play with my place. I drink in solitude like rain. This place is cold as hell, & without is the spring snow, but I don't care.

Am writing "Speed the Plough."[13] It is heaven to play with John, but he is wise, & does not come here too much. I don't want to go out, but I spend much time making my body pleasant—just for its own sake. I have an ever augmenting horror of Eleanor's voice—is this the way Freudian Complexes are started?[14] Given our relations—then consider that voice of hers & the attitude it betokens. Then my horror from childhood that any person—any man—should take up such an attitude against myself. Her voice then becomes an incarnation of all that I loathe most, instinctively reject most passionately.

[13] "Speed the Plough" about a shell-shocked soldier returning to England is one of Butts's most anthologised and critically acclaimed stories. Butts herself became less enthusiastic, writing to a friend: "I'm trying to persuade Seldes to reprint ["Change"] in an anthology of *Dial* stories. He prefers the original "Speed the Plough" of which I am heartily sick." Butts to Wescott, 43 Belsize Park Gardens, London, undated (1923/4), Wescott papers. In fact it was "Speed the Plough" which was included in *Stories from the Dial* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1924).

[14] Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Austrian founder of psychoanalysis.

5 April 1917

There has now passed eighteen hours since I heard of John's arrest.[15] 12 hours for the passion, & now. Am I reconciled? No—in the ghastly half state when one prays to suffer & cannot. I have done everything I can, little things are creeping back. Tomorrow is Good Friday.

Eros on the Cross.

It may establish our love for ever, on the other hand—

The roses—the roses we have not gathered. They will wither, & their mortality may not be renewed with other flowers. Despair makes one lyrical.

6 April 1917

I suppose I must be recovering. The great eddy that overwhelmed me has left me deadened in a backwash.

"Calm of mind—all passion spent" [Milton, "Samson Agonistes"].

I have irrational hopes. I remember when I broke the Hermes, but the head remained. I do not know where he is.

Today has been a hell of quiet. Began Εροσ [Eros] poem.[16] I want [Harrison's*] *Prolegomena* [(1904)] again, & *Themis* [(1912)]. One's lovers die & there remain certain immortal words. Perhaps it is only through pain that natures like mine live most keenly. In happiness I am shy, sceptical, acquiescent.

I want all the Greek things again.

11 April 1917

Moved [John's] things.

Wrote to him. Sent the letter.

Sonia [Cohen] came. New hat. Rain in Tottenham Court Rd. Shall I still be wearing the peacock pettie when he comes again?

13 April 1917

Comfortless things oppress me but last night I finished the poem—"Εροσ [Eros] on the Cross."

[15] See Rodker's biographical outline and note 33.

[16] Renamed "Good Friday Hymn. 1917." Its opening lines may well refer to Eleanor Roger's anti-CO sentiments: "She's won / Was it a 'foregone conclusion'?" Unpublished TS, Butts papers.

15 April 1917

London Nights [by Arthur] Symons. These elderly amorists weary me. ‡ Neither love nor lust, gallantry or passion is there, but a tired echo of all. How much better is the prose preface both for style & matter. The nineties & their sterile weariness. Swinburne's decadence, [Anatole] France saved by his profound irony.[17] All the girls the same & there aren't more than 36 ways of doing it. Poor Symons, with his infinitely competent technique. Thank God he turned critic. John is very near today, & I'm not so agonised. Knee recovering.

‡Bad judgement, some of the poems are exquisite.

26 April 1917 Salterns.

Yesterday's bad news has left me obsessed with ghosts. Ghosts of John in infinite discomfort [on hunger strike] aching, unsolaced, unfed. Why don't I lie on the floor tonight? Partly because I hate discomfort, partly because I hate sentiment & futility. Partly because I recognise in the impulse a heritage from MC-H [Butts's mother]. It is conventionally pretty, but since my mind is wretched why make my body sore? Besides I loathe cold & discomfort. Yet my easy bed shames me. It is all a matter of relative satisfactions.

Salterns maddens me now. Outside it John & I & all the youth of the world turn in agony. Here they strut & fume, & bicker & prop up their party cries, & sentimentalise over the starkest realities. They know nothing of our passion & would not be sorry for it. In the long run, it is our day, not theirs.

I can't reach John. I can only smoulder over what I know to be happening, & comfort myself with fantastic imaginations. I should be mad if I thought much. Hatred of Eleanor revives. Her letter this morning gave the note. I want to get back. I'm nearer him in Town [London] than here.

He is weak, every hour he grows weaker, & is in pain. I can do nothing. My body is weighted with lead. This is the house of death. Tony is good to me.

[17] Although this seems to be a negative comment on the British poet Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909), Butts's long-held love of his work and that of the French writer Anatole Francois Thilbaut [France] (1844–1924) can be seen particularly in the many references to their work in Butts's first novel, "Dangerous" ("Unborn Gods").

29 April 1917

Australians—Why should we have chosen the meaner part? Voluntary degradation—in the maudlin hope that some day, the world may be more free—see truth.[18]

John's part & theirs—I can't see clearly, my own is poor. I'm torn, with every impulse dragging me to my work, stale to the Council. What have I done? Very little. Struggled with the horror of Eleanor & my own mind—all I'm fit for. The rest pis aller, CC, NCCL & the rest.[19] There still remains the novel, poems, my craft. I'd stand by that at the last & defy every voice of the pack.

Then John—I'm making him—but I haven't filled a cartridge, or nursed a sick man—I'd have liked that, or sped a plough, or fed a pig, or [filled] a man's seat in an office. I've economised, had to—suffered—some. Thought . . . & I'm still muddled. With Eleanor I've failed. "We have chosen—a broken & solitary road that leads but to a wilderness; about us there are the rest walking on the high road, under stars."

7 May 1917

In London. Tony [Butts]. Jack White, a question. Great joy in *La Vie Parisienne*.[20] I think here that I have recaptured something of the 'Vie Athénienne' also. I can look at my books & my flowers, my bare walls, & painted jars, & lovely clothes & heaped cushions & bare feet, my utter liberty, & contrast it with my memories of Lesbos & be glad.

Nothing from John—on Saturday, much bitterness, a restless mind & a craving body.

■ ■ ■

[18] Perhaps reference to the fact that the Australians refused to accept capital punishment for desertion, despite huge British pressure. Given Butts's NCCL work and the fact that Rodker and several of Butts's friends are COs, the executions of COs earlier in the war would be a very real consideration. See William Moore, *The Thin Yellow Line* (London: Wordsworth, 1999), 150–5.

[19] "CC": probably reference to London County Council, for which Butts is doing voluntary work.

[20] Probably the French magazine of that title. A popular choice; the British writer Edmund Blunden remarks on a soldier reading it in the trenches in 1916. See Blunden, *Undertones of War*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1936), 14.

18 September 1917

[Reading Yeats:*] "Wild Swans" etc v. vers libres [*The Wild Swans at Coole, Other Verses and a Play in Verse (At the Hawk's Well),* (1917)]. abcbd(d) rhyme often assonance rhythm continuous.

u - u - u - u—

Half-way, assonance, irregular stanza construction, rhyme where it is wanted, not where it, strictly, should be. Thus it remains an agreeable undersong, & the pure cadence can be heard. A translation into sentence rhythm is often good. Japanese & Chinese poems an original work—usually vile—Louis Gilmore in the *The Little Review*.[21]

Yeats is generally quite formal, using extremely simple measures—beside him Gilmore & [Max] Bodenheim can go to hell.[22] But not the translations from the *Noh*—vers librists seem to consider that release from rhyme means release from cadence, instead of paying a double attention to cadence. Rhyme is immaterial, cadence never.

Our business to discover new cadence, a new pattern—rhyme, except with a master induces padding. Learn not to pad.

[Browning,] "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came"—theme treated objectively. [Maeterlinck,] "Death of Tintagiles," [James Thomson,] "City of Dreadful Night" same subject.

Dostoevsky "bathhouse full of spiders."

Others' work on same subject? [Huysmans,] *A Rebours*? Sappho? vulgar terrors?[23]

[Euripides,] *Trojan Women*?

[Coleridge,] "Christabel" again all objective.

Now I have begun to write again, mechanically I have bought two exercise books.

[21] Butts is probably reading the June 1917 issue of *The Little Review,* as it contains poetry by both Gilmore and Bodenheim. *The Little Review* was an American little magazine owned by Margaret Anderson, and central to the early publication of Modernist work. Its Foreign Editors included Ezra Pound and John Rodker. An early story by Butts ("Lettres Imaginaires") was published in the *The Little Review* in 1919 and the opening chapters of *Ashe of Rings* appeared in 1921 issues alongside James Joyce's *Ulysses*. See 8 December 1920.

[22] Maxwell Bodenheim (1893–1954), American poet.

[23] Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848–1907), French writer, influenced by naturalism, aesthetic decadence, and medieval mysticism. His *Là-bas* (1891) involves a fictional biography centred on the life of Gilles de Retz.

23 September 1917 Mystica Vannum Iacchos [*Ashe of Rings*]

More atmosphere into the flat menage. Get the relations between Ivan & Judy clearer before the quarrel. Any sketches of English mentality at the beginning of the war must be unique or omitted. Omitted.

More Peter.

Ch IX. Too much talk about Judy. The Judy, Ivan, Peter triangle must be worked out.

From Chapter III on—

Work up Peter v. Ivan. Prison, Picadilly, taxis.

Judy's dream—re-write—the bones are there, but the touch is not sure. It doesn't carry.

26 September 1917

Books: [Delafield's] *Zella Sees Herself* [(1917)], Zenker's *Anarchism*. Both appropriate.

1 October 1917

Last night's raid.[24] The Hampstead gun barking over head, blood pale flashes like summer lightning. The place shook, there was a lull. I heard in a house across the back yard "A Broken Doll" played faintly, in bad time, but persistent.[25] Why do I stay here instead of in that friendly Tube? Intellectual superiority & a desire to annoy Eleanor & Porter?[26] No. That's their explanation. I feel as though I were obliged to 'get above' my fear. I can only do that by daring it to do its worst, hugging it close to me, letting it glare me in the face. I slept profoundly once it was over, & am curiously weak today.

Bodies can't prevail over that which is in the sky every evening between eight & ten. It seems that mind must or spirit. If we are of the Sixth

[24] The German bombing of London began in December 1914. There was successive heavy bombing between 29 September and 1 October 1917.

[25] "A Broken Doll" (1915), words by Clifford Harris and music by James W. Tate, was one of the songs from *Samples,* which opened at the Playhouse, London in 1915. Butts incorporates the song title into her unpublished poem "Good Friday Hymn. 1917."

[26] Porter unidentified, but see 19 February 1919.

race we believe that we are pure spirit & unconquerable.[27] The logical sequence to this is that one does not hide down Tubes.

"Love & man's unconquerable mind" [Wordsworth, "Toussaint, the most unhappy Man"] over & over again. I curled up & read [Shelley's] *Prometheus Unbound*. Microcosm & macrocosm again. It has taken me a step further.[28]

But I want the country so. The sun & the moon are making the earth a miracle. And I'm afraid to go alone, & I can't take Eleanor, & there is no one else, & I mind passionately because I can't go with Eleanor—oh hell!

8 October 1917

We believe in love—but with the "rulers of darkness of the world" [Ephesians 6.12] is it operative?

In October 1917 until the end of the year, as Rodker moves from Wandsworth Prison to do his work of national importance in Dartmoor, Butts has an unrequited passion for the actor Edwin Greenwood.[29]

Attempts to explain events Oct 1917

There are our bodies & contained in them certain sensations—passions perhaps, e.g. intellectual, amorous, compassionate, hunger for food & fearful etc.

[27] According to Mme Blavatsky, the history of humanity is divided into several stages of development ("races"). She writes: "The exultant pulse will beat high in the heart of the race now in the American zone but there will be no more Americans when the Sixth Race commences; no more, in fact, than Europeans; for they will have now become *a new Race, and many new nations*. Yet the fifth will not die, but will survive for a while, overlapping the new Race for many hundred thousands of years to come, it will, as we have just said, become transformed with it more slowly than its new successor—still getting entirely altered in mentality, general physique and stature." *The Secret Doctrine* II (London: Theosophical Publishing Co, 1888), 465.

[28] Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), British Romantic poet. Lifelong influence on Butts.

[29] Edwin Greenwood (born 1895), actor and later novelist, director and screenwriter for Alfred Hitchcock. It is unclear whether Greenwood is married in 1917. By 1920 he certainly is: "Edwin Greenwood and his wife. . . . Edwin is a struggling actor with nothing but his salary. Georgie has a baby or two." Butts to Ada Briggs, 13 August 1920. Perhaps remembering the conversations of 1917 Butts also tells her aunt that "Edwin Greenwood . . . is a sharp-tongued person without any false delicacy." Butts to Ada Briggs, undated August 1920, Butts papers.

When do we become aware of ourselves? When one of these functions of our body comes into consciousness. There are innumerable ways in which this may happen—intellectually (Edwin) aesthetically—"love, or art, or faith, or wine" [Henley, "Praise the generous gods for giving"]. But this impulse, by which we in several ways, come alive, has one source. Τονοσ—tension—life, love, desire, vitality—

It is like a thin cord, a nerve, permeating every film of our being. It becomes taut & thrills, & we live.

The stimulus continually short circuits. There are, as it were, several stages through which it must pass in order to produce a complete reaction. It must act through our bodies, it must be an intellectual thing, it must become an emotional thing.

Common example—a love-affair—or love as we are to make it be—must be physical, one's bodily tension must be at its highest, there must be the thrill of mind to mind, "sympathy to sympathy." If that were completely attained we would then reach a state of absolute being. (This absolute happiness, Schopenhauer says, would, if ever attained, annihilate the person who experienced it.) It would be the sight of Pan, the poetical phrase for the fusion of all inward experience into a further state of being too pure, too violent for our bodies to sustain.

Whether our consciousness would cease with the disappearance of our bodies is still a debatable point.

But, this circuit may be completed on one plane of our consciousness without affecting the rest. 'Intellectual Beauty' may be completely realised, or amorous, without affecting more than superficially, the rest of life concerned.

Here lies possibly a real difference between masculine & feminine psychology. Men may be more likely to obtain complete isolated, especially intellectual reactions than women who are 'more of a piece.' Hence the breakdowns in masculine philosophy with all its profundity. They have not worked out their metaphysical speculations in their bodies, above all their love affairs.

E.g. (Edwin's intellectual beauty, his rhythm, not co-related with his relations with women).

Thais—& the slave girl's dress "such was the harmony of her nature that it became her as no queenly robe."

Annihilation or love—the consciousness of this rhythm which is life, is the best of all states for man. Crowds part away before one, one's fin-

ger nails burnish, the tilt of surfaces lose their significance "one becomes a tranquillity." Such states may even prevail over bodily disease.

Conversely there is no discomfort measurable with the breaking of this harmony like this. A tangent cuts a travelling circle—sometimes the pace is so violent that the tangent is drawn in & absorbed. Otherwise the circle is disintegrated & broken.

Cf: Jack White: "every sensuous phenomenon has it spiritual equivalent, & vice versa."

Eleanor & I. Effect on me—intense depression, anguish, spasms of hate, a clawing of the hands—exhaustion.

Edwin—are the reactions similar in a more sinister degree? In both cases we are visited by a force which we will give the specific human label of 'evil,' "inimical to our well-being." He materialises, a quiet thing waiting to catch him up, something which he has to dodge.

Is this subjective or objective?

(i) the rationalist explanation, inadequate—
(ii) frequently sentimental—the Eustace Miles touch—[30]

In both cases it produces this effect that we are liable to become dominated by an evil 'tension.' If its nature could be determined it might be the clue to the relation between our agony, & the cosmic agony which is manifested in the war. M.V.I.[31]

It is our Dark Tower.

Edwin plans his deliverance by rationalism. I do not think that this will be sufficient. "The wise want love"—etc. [Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*].

"Love & man's unconquerable mind."

Edwin at the Golden Gates [unidentified], Edwin after a dress rehearsal.

Innumerable delicate antitheses.

26 October 1917

Edwin's way & mine.

Contrasted broadly his outlook is rationalistic & pessimistic, mine

[30] Unclear why this is sentimental, Eustace Miles was a prolific author of books on diet and fitness.

[31] See 11 January 1917.

mystic & in some way an optimism. We argue together because our 'pace' is the same, but his tension acts through a broken & indifferent instrument, & for my part, my health makes optimism possible.

Starting from this—his deepest philosophy seems to me to be a form of stoicism, even asceticism. To one violently moved by pleasure or pain there are 4 choices open. He may yield himself to every impulse, he may deny himself equally through a mean prudence. Both in this case are impossible. There are two equivalents, to these ways, equivalents, if you like, on a higher plane. Both are attempts at a philosophical solution, attempts to resolve the antithesis between good & evil, pleasure & pain.

The first way is stoic & ascetic, it is a form of emasculation, a creative discipline. It is like a man going to a banquet, touching, seeing, smelling, but refusing to taste, but not through want of appetite.‡ By his observation of the good, & his rejection of his final satisfaction in it, by his deliberate short circuit, he arrives at a further state which makes detachment from pleasure or pain possible & both a matter of indifference to him.‡ [Mussorgsky's opera] *Khovanchina*. [Euripides,] *Troades* [*Trojan Women*].

‡how? Explain.

It is a gospel of discipline & discipline implies mistrust, & occasionally fear, but as a means of self-surpassing it is noble.

‡"I can't trust life, how do you suppose that I can trust you?"

With Edwin it implies the final victory of pain. Since suffering is the ultimate, by means of self-inflicted suffering, by courting its embrace one may evade it in the end by rising above it.‡

So much for Edwin. There is the lost way. Both ways seek the same end, to rise above life's antithesis. 'Beyond Good & Evil.' This way implies at the start a power of detachment, of recognising all states as partial & transitory. In this knowledge one 'seeks salvation' not by the refusal of any experience or any feast, but by an acceptance both passionate & detached of both. It neither screams for pleasure nor refuses to enjoy it, it will come to grips with pain, but will not enthrone it.

‡No cowardice here, sheer daring.

In this it seeks mastery, & so, when the inevitable choice comes, chooses that which seems most dangerous & most fruitful. Both ways seem to end in the same state, 'beyond good & evil,' pain or pleasure (but not yet to me truth or untruth. That I cannot yet perceive.)

These states may not be identical. Their approach is contradictory at least.

For this pursuit of mine Edwin accuses me of hedonism because I accept everything as it approaches me, & if I must choose, choose where there is least renunciation for any part of my nature.

He also adds that appalling dangers threaten me & will inevitably destroy me.

"You will not keep your fineness long, you will reel & sicken & scream & be rolled in the mud. Your work will be useless, what flower can grow out of such manure?"

To this there is no rational answer. I can appeal to two things, one a wholly non-rational vision, & the other to an empiric yard-stick whose significance would hardly be admitted—not by Edwin. In his *Rise of the Greek Epic* [(1907)] Gilbert Murray* approaches what I mean. I too have my inevitable asceticism, contrasted with his, a classic asceticism perhaps as against an eastern or a medieval.

"The East took its asceticism in orgies as it were, in horrors of self mutilation, bodily & mental, which are as repellent in their way as the corresponding tempests of rage or sensuality. Greek asceticism, though sometimes mystical, was never insane. It was nearly always related to some reasonable end & sought the strengthening of body & mind, not their mortification."

Herein is an antithesis, not mine, certainly not Edwin's but it leads on to the explanation of my yard-stick for all conduct, that elusive quality the Greeks called Sophrosynê. "It is something like Temperance, Gentleness, Mercy, sometimes Innocence, never mere Caution, or tempering of dominant emotion by gentler thought."

To this I would add—good form, fine breeding, humour, a sense of shapeliness—these guide choice. In all, this virtue is σοφρον "with saving thoughts" contrasted with ολοοφρον "with destroying thoughts."

"There is a way of thinking with destroys & a way which saves" [Murray]. But beyond this I have become aware of a state of being of which Edwin has no knowledge. ‡

He told me to describe to him these states of which I spoke, & let him find the greatest common measure for them all. It was hard to do, because his scepticism was so violent, that at first it made me dumb, & then filled me with the wish to please & interest & convince rather than state them truly & leave it at that.

‡ "I have not known tranquillity for an hour ever since my mind began to work."

It made me laugh to see him produce his rationalist explanation as final, & shake it at me like a clenched fist. It won't do. It's all right, but it does not go far enough.

And God shall make thy soul a Glass where eighteen thousand
Aeons pass,

> And thou shalt see the gleaming worlds as men see dew upon the grass.
> [Flecker, "The Gates of Damascus"].

We shall have to "beat out this measure to another tune" some day, some night.

Is Edwin's horror & mine objective or subjective? Is there a force outside ourselves, or are we are own devourers? Is his accusation of sheer final hedonism in me justified?

I want to discover the good life, & must inevitably seek it by a process of elimination. I cannot assume this or that to be good 'out of air' like Cole & Mellor & Trilby Ewer [unidentified].

> "Break me O God, disgrace me, destroy me as you will, but save me from little interest & little successes, & the life that passes like the shadow of a dream" [Wells, *The New Machiavelli*].[32]

That at least has been sincere.

It seems to me today that Edwin's divergence & mine can be measured by the different measure of our faiths.‡ He 'believes in' certain 'truths' of art & science & philosophy. Ultimately however he does not believe in his own impulse, his own will, that is, he does not trust life.‡ In many inessential things he is less sceptical than I [am], but in the ultimate validity of Schopenhauer's 'Real,' 'will,' he has no trust.

‡I am coming to believe that analysis to be superficial.

‡Or rather his first will is immediately overridden by another will, a will he has cultivated—a will which may be more profound. "Infinite Caution" he called it, our acceptance of good rather than better.

Does this imply cowardice?

Probably it is a matter of physical constitution—it would be absurd to disparage him. He is a great man—or perhaps a great Titan fettered in his sick body.

It is difficult for me to be fair. I am so irresistibly drawn to him that I think that if he would trust me, I could save him—I misplace "would" for "could," & for the rest, no man can quicken another soul. That has been my mistake before, only, for a few hours, I believed that I came near to doing it. Then I acted on his sub-consciousness. When his intelligence re-asserted itself, he thrust me away. It was like long steel fingers.

[32] Herbert George Wells (1866–1946), British novelist and political writer.

31 October 1917

We had it out—& there, I hope, is an end. ‡

I was hurt, but I do not see rationally why I should be. I think that it is painful to me because he does not admit the possibility of my further or similar good.

‡"I would not trust you, you especially, round the corner."

Mystica Vannum Iacchos [*Ashe of Rings*]

Take for the central theme the hatred of age for youth, of the old for the new, of yesterday's rose for today's, a Hatred expressing itself in a cruelty, part blind & instinctive, part conscious.

This is for the larger stage, implied throughout, war & its consequent repression & destruction.

In cameo—from another angle (age well in the background), the sixth race, & the fifth—Van, Ivan, & Judy.

The effort of the Ideal to avoid contact with the real, the thing-as-seen from the thing-in-itself.

3 November 1917

The Shewing up of Ezra Pound*

At last my most intimate convictions have been focused & justified, neither scholar, nor poet, nor philosopher, but a most kindly romantic, a competent, sometimes witty critic. Then dull, all dull, he & his set, dull because they have nothing to say.

John [Rodker] incidentally must work his deliverance.

8 November 1917

His [Edwin's] caution is triumphant. For a time, at least, I am thrown out of that dance. Out of my temporal desolation queer things arise. I could have said that this afternoon a companion spirit of great beauty was in the studio, comforting me. If I could have named him, it would have been Shelley whose most mature work I have lately been continually compelled to read.

15 November 1917 [Dartmoor]

On Hessany Tor.[33] I had never seen such places before. They rose out of the moor, the skeleton, of the earth where the flesh had peeled off, evil shapes, like words of power.

'Widdershins' perhaps like the spiritual boils & cancers which afflict not only Dostoevsky's people but us all. But what we conceal, lie over, gild, suppress, here nature gives the main significance. The tors are the flowers of Dartmoor.

Is cancer the word—when we are 'against the course of the sun' [i.e. widdershins] are we cancerous?

19 November 1917

Is this triangle possible? Or in other words, do I regret what I have done? No, but I wish I could tell John how, at once. Either I should have told him all immediately—or nothing. As it is, I pave the way. Why have I not told him? It would be too much, & I have committed myself by my silence, but equally because words are impossible. The affair is inchoate still, uncrystallised. I cannot surmise the future. As a story it would not shape—it would sound like a repeated humiliation. It may be that yet.

But I am rediscovering John.

Now considering John do I regret? In details yes, in essentials no. I am very humble before him tonight—making the most of my own unworthiness.

It lessened John in my eyes for a while, but that was the pendulum's swing. I react violently now but I shall steady, & from that comes new power.

John would have done the same, it helped save my spirit—& fed my starved vanity, it enlightened me.[34] But these—excuses—had it 'good-in-itself?'

There seem no reasons, but some profundity answers in the affirmative. There has been grief, humiliation, & an unknown future probably worse—John may be displeased—I don't know—it's the hardest adven-

[33] Rodker is doing "work of national importance" at the Work Centre at Princetown on Dartmoor, which had been converted in March 1917 from a "large convict prison." Conditions for the Conscientious Objectors at the centre are grim. See [Rodker] *Memoirs of Other Fronts* (London: Putnam, 1932). Butts visits him there. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 45–7.

[34] Rodker himself had had a number of affairs before Butts, including one while Sonia Cohen was pregnant with their daughter Joan.

ture of them all. Talk about a gay life! But whatever happens I can't say that I wish it had never happened.

Love—& do what you like [Augustine, *Epist. Joann. Tractatus*].

Bury your past—but it's more than that.

"In a week or so I shall be considering myself the injured party in all this."

With Edwin a man, with John a woman, subject to him, 'ware of him, subtle, passively sensual. He baffles me, intrigues, fascinates me—I am afraid lest he should warp my freedom. Often we do not focus—but there are times. I am on my mettle, no, I am really afraid. If it is only one of the ways, well & good.

I shall always need Edwin to reassert my virility!

I have seen him [Edwin] again, not a lover, but a race, a people. They come from Asia, creeping across the world into Europe, long tentative fingers. They banked up against our castle walls like the waters before a dam. Now they run free and the blood of our noblest is mixed with theirs. Before them our forms of civilisation may not perish, but may be terribly assimilated. They are right. Where they breed, we decay.

It is rather pitiful to me—they do not love soil or care how things should grow—sentiment is outraged, & the rising sap in my body.

But I understand anti-Semitism.

We are above our races—we crystallise and I say that man's will can prevail over chaos, & he that any such hope is vain delusion. But where the East & the West have met we have Egypt & Babylon & Greece. "I will think upon Rahab & Babylon, [. . .] Tyre & the Morians [Ethiopia] Also, lo! There was he born . . ." [Psalm 87—in praise of Zion]

"Lettres Imaginaires"[35]

A woman in love, half gratified, then violently turned down, without explanation.

Humiliation, bewilderment, horror, gradual reassertion of her will, until the adventure thus deflected, & the consummation, physical & spir-

[35] The basis of Butts's "Lettres Imaginaires," *The Little Review*, 6, 6 (October 1919), 8–12; and 6, 7 (November 1919), 27–32. Title perhaps influenced by Ezra Pound's 1917 poem of that name. Subject clearly inspired by Butts's unsatisfying relationship with Edwin Greenwood.

itual not achieved are achieved by herself in a delicate profound detachment. In love one can sometimes have the adventure by oneself.

"Progress—the welding together of society for whatever ends. Progress is a centripetal movement—obliterating man in the mass. Civilisation is centrifugal, it permits, it postulates the assertion of personality. . . . Progress subordinates. Civilisation co-ordinates. The individual emerges in civilisation. He is submerged in progress."

Norman Douglas, *South Wind* [(1917)][36]

It is like art. Civilisation is the contemplation at leisure of some vast upheaveal one calls progress.

It would seem that one cannot call the Periclean age civilised, or the Renaissance, save in so far that the latter looked back on Greece.

"Emotion recollected in tranquillity" [Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*].

Live in the moment, or in eternity—the living moment, durée—never in the future or in the past.

Freudian theory of the subconscious. Dreams & wit—expression of unfulfilled desire. Explanation into the nature of will itself—the "last fact behind which analysis cannot go" [Emerson, "Self-Reliance"]?

Pace—the measure of society as of horses, & usually a slow one.

The triviality, the vast stir about nothing, the snail where there should be the swift. Explanation of Napoleon's success, not profundity, but pace.

Not to describe a great occasion in the grand manner, but to make the crossing of a street equally significant (Ford Madox Hueffer*—Selsey).[37]

[36] George Norman Douglas (1868–1952), British novelist and travel-writer. Butts meets Douglas in Florence in 1924.

[37] It is not exactly certain when Butts met the British writer and editor Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford). According to his biographer "there is no record of him in London between 19 June [1917] and the last week in January 1918." Max Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford*, 563 note 34. He is at Violet Hunt's cottage at Selsey, Sussex, on 22 October 1917 where he first meets Stella Bowen and Phyllis Reid. If Butts was present (as her entry suggests), Hunt does not mention her. Hunt does record that she saw Butts "at the Reid-Bowen menage" in London on 2 December 1917. *The Return of the Good Soldier: Ford Madox Ford and Violet Hunt's 1917 Diary*, ed. Robert Secor

Up to now we have had writers who have seen marvellously close, with complete realism of detail. What we want is a new way of seeing—a complete new attitude of approach. In fact a new imagination. The analysis has been made, now for a new synthesis. Joyce, Eliot,* [Wyndham] Lewis?[38]

In love the worst crime is to outrage the lover's sense of beauty. A "sentimentality"? (Violet Hunt—Selsey)[39]

Let one another alone, & let one another alone, & go on letting one another alone.

The world to be renewed by a sense of style—e.g. Ford on that night. I did well, & he, the supreme stylist, not so well, but John recognised, & I . . .

& Marie Secor, English Literary Studies no 30 (B.C.: University of Victoria, 1983), 84. Butts may be reflecting on some earlier meeting or she may have seen him in January 1918 since Ford is in London then. It is difficult to date these entries precisely. The final entry to be dated in 1917 is 19 November; the next entry Butts dates is 20 February 1918. The others lie somewhere in between . . .

[38] James Augustine Aloysius Joyce (1882–1941), Irish writer whose works such as *Ulysses* are central to canonical Modernism. Butts and Joyce both had work published in the summer 1920 issue of *The Little Review*. See 1920 note 5. Percy Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957), British artist and writer, War Artist, editor of *Blast*, and inventor of Vorticism. His now-legendary antagonism to Bloomsbury group is explored in Butts's article "Bloomsbury" (1998). Friend of Rodker, whose portrait (like many others of his generation) Lewis drew. For reference to Butts's portrait, see 4 January 1920.

[39] Isobel Violet Hunt (1862–1942), British writer, lived with Ford Madox Ford (then Hueffer, Hunt adopted his name although they were not married) from 1911 until their break-up during the war. See note 37.

1918

20 February 1918 [1 Glenilla Studios, London]

John Rodker

What analysis? Again the short circuit, the broken rhythm. A noble intellect, a noble impulse, uncorrelated—barren. His women who are to have no souls. . . . His demand for a temporal absolute.

"My weak insolence that is broken against myself."

Like the inconclusive anguish of Tchekov his master. Am I so far the wiser?

The cinema—showing the way to the art of the future. The new orientation. Jack White & John my upper & nether millstone.

Back-stair religion.[Stories]
2 girls in a cottage—practising magic ["Friendship's Garland"].
'Tart' & the ritual bath ["The Golden Bough"].
(iii) ["]Madonna of the Magnificat["].

The conception of Sophrosynê as it developed among the Epicureans & today by Norman Douglas & Anatole France?

"Epicurus approves none of these things." The Epicurean & rationalist & the subconscious emotions demanding their secret satisfactions

Magic—

"Madonna of the Magnificat": cut opening explanation or insert elsewhere.

■ ■ ■

Mary Butts makes no note of the fact that she marries John Rodker at Hampstead Register Office on 10 May 1918. She announces her marriage to her family after the event. Her first entry for May 1918 refers to her pregnancy.[1]

[1] Rodker described their relationship in London in 1918 in the following acerbic manner: "when we met it was still fearfully, fearful of ourselves and of each other and of the world outside, because we were living in sin, everyone an enemy, possibly to part us; and then she was pregnant, and furious with me because of it [see 28 December 1918] and to comfort her we married, and it was extraordinary the difference it made knowing everyone was our ally, that we went to bed with the fullest approval of the Church and State." [Rodker], *Memoirs of Other Fronts*, 191–5.

[11/12] May 1918

Tight across stomach, like leather belt continually drawn in—pressure continuous. Hunger & thirst—complete isolation.

Self & child—conception 'immaculate' at least irrelevant. The father does not matter—the race with one's love continues apart—but the unit is two, the trinity seems artificial, late, romantic, insincere. This was followed by a contempt—I cannot afford sentiment, but to John & Yanko [Jean Varda] I have become automatically sainted.[2] Not my beauty or wit or compassion mattered to them as my mechanical function as mother. It's a bitter joke.

The horror of the sprawling vulgarity—maternity seen in trains.

But as he & I live differently need our child resemble all others?

Or are all babies alike?

My contempt equals my pleasure.

Now I have hypnotised myself into peace & persuasion that the last sacrifice will not be asked of me.

13 May 1918

Only pains in breast 'expecting' but very fit. Beneath complete re-assurance, external terror & fury lest I'm condemned to infinite drudgery. This irritation is sexual, or would find sexual relief.

14 May 1918

Last night. Table [séance]. Daddy [Butts's father died in 1905]. Danger to Tony—through me. To see medium. Bad night. Today—'transparent.' This to be followed up. Selfish terror, insolence & peace because of the sun & the warm wind.

17 May 1918

Tired—with deepening violet rings round my nipples. Easily moved to tears—"Black Eyed Susans"—Tony, John.

Today we then gave each other baths. 'The happiest morning of my

[2] Jean Varda, known as Yanko (1893–1971), Greek artist and ballet dancer. "Yanko, a Greek of infinite wit and fun, made Byzantine-cubist mosaics out of broken mirrors, glass and crockery." Robert Medley, *Drawn from the Life: A Memoir* (London: Faber, 1983), 101. Yanko moves to France where he lives for some time with the British surrealist painter Roland Penrose. Years later, living in California, he is a close friend of Anais Nin, who names her book *Collages* (1964) after his favourite artistic form.

life.' Alone tonight—I have not succeeded with Eleanor, never never with women. Brother & lover, & our trinity perfect—but she, & Gwen [Ingram] are my wandering stars far off "in which man may not trust." Nina [Hamnett] also? There is my secret joy my secret despair, my secretest adventure & passion. Life is more than the pain of it. I want her to give me what I want—but if that came, it would not be her. It would reside in its moment. The war would stop.

22 May 1918

Bored. Envious of Phyllis. Forlorn, no success possible. Last night the old 'illumination.' Today Ireland. Jack [White]—the end of it in talk & sophistry & cant. But why should Jack sustain our ideals?[3] Philosophy with John. Nature v. nurture. Hélas!

Dostoevsky

It is not understood by English critics. He accepts Christ, the antithesis of the 'separate self.' But in Stavrogin [character in *The Possessed*]—perhaps in Dostoevsky also, there is "the memory of this impertinence" [*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* trans. Fitzgerald]. Not Christ or anti-Christ—& further synthesis.

27 May 1918

There is nothing wrong with my body but everything with my nervous control. This is not illness—underneath there is an immense content of a right process well continuing. All the discomforts are local. There are times when I take pleasure in my nightmare of slavery—but I do not somehow believe in it. One is so & so, & karma dissolves before one's personal will.

But there is dullness, a fatigue of spirit, a vast isolation.

5 June 1918

The depression needed a focus to result in an appalling clairvoyance.

A pity—déchirant, indignation & weariness, but infinite pity. Images of pain & something like despair. It has pursued me for years, but all my defences are weaker. The Billing case let it break through.[4]

[3] See Jack White's biographical outline.

[4] The Billing Case, 29 May–4 June 1918: sensational libel trial against Noel Pemberton Billing M.P., editor of *Vigilante*, for his statement that the lesbian actress Maud

I could do nothing all day. It's rough on John. I think he knows too much about it.

[Euripides'] *Troades [Trojan Women]*.

16 June 1918

[Pregnancy] Over.[5] The lean solitary feeling has come back—no more drain of blood from my brain into my womb. All alone & wretchful. I could spring, not cower like a guarding hen. I cried because "Michael was dead" [Wordsworth, "Michael"], but now I'm thin & virginal, skin over a core of steel.

Gentler.

It must happen again, & soon, but I love this freedom. The crystal wall has closed again, my sheath dances with me.

17 June 1918

Nothing to be written, only the ache to write. Roofed hell. Yet why am I open to all daimons & Eleanor shut? No sooner I am open to all the pleasure that is in John than I fear my adoration. Coward!

29 June 1918

Out of this world we both need to leave there have appeared certain persons whose form is significant. Yanko with his 'secret ardour,' John, Nina [Hamnett], Walter Sickert, [Poppoea] Vanda—all the rest are painted boards beside these.[6]

One should not approach new people with any preconception about them—custom helps there.

The elation that follows a dissipation—one feels that one can work—get something out—finds one is fatigued quickly—& that the elation is so fine that one wants to talk & sing, or dance it away, not kennel it at a desk by a pen & ink.

Allen's forthcoming private performance of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* was connected with "the Cult of the Clitoris."

[5] Probably by abortion, see 12 March 1920.

[6] Walter Sickert (1860–1942), British Impressionist painter, associated with the London Group of painters which included Nina Hamnett, Roger Fry, Mark Gertler, Christopher Nevinson. Sickert taught both Stella Bowen and Anthony Butts. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 448 note 25, and 451 note 73. Poppoea [Poppy] Vanda, ballet enthusiast who looked after Butts's daughter, Camilla, while she was a toddler.

7 July 1918 In Somerset

Maiden Bradley. There by mistake (John's). Refined pub, bad cider.

8 July 1918 [Wells, Somerset]

Building Cathedral sucked this infernal hole dry—or squirted it with dampness of an immortal blanket. Here was Avalon, and the Sanc Graal—here a dirty little town no Somerset mana. Extreme energy—pleasure in the tiniest detail. The large wind, the full green hills, the square stone houses unreal. People live in slums & squares & move in buses and in and out of tube stations, not in this roaring sea of glass.

10 July 1918 Glastonbury [Somerset]

When one has recovered from the station disproportionately large—there is the walk through a string of villas attaching it to the town. Town dull—abbey a sinister place. Sat on ruin of Edgar chapel . . . the sun struck the Mary chapel over the crypt, suggested evil magic. Got no further.

Here one has to skip off—all commentators on wrong lines—not XVIII C vistas of "sublime prospects," not the tragedy of the reformation, not the medieval church, not the inanities of modern Anglicanism, nothing but the source of "mana." Crystallised. Joseph of Arimathea, the Larks of Wonder, Anthem, Sanc Graal, Holy Thorn. Origins, the mystery whose cycle may be approaching its completion. Not irrelevances of this or any other century. In the maze of lost trancepts where is Anthony's tomb? Bond goes wrong here.[7]

Nothing done.

11 July 1918

They charged us 5/- for our breakfast. It was a bad breakfast—John very noble and indignant.

Supper worse—in pawn here with no cash. Hungry to bed. Axminster an adorable fresh village smelling of the sea.

[7] Frederick Bligh Bond (1864–1945) had been employed by the Church to excavate the site of Glastonbury a few years earlier. His unusual methods included automatic writing and consulting a psychic to produce spirit messages from the Abbey's former monks with clues as to the location of lost ruins. See Bond, *The Gate of Remembrance: The Story of the Psychological Experiment Which Resulted in the Discovery of the Edgar Chapel at Glastonbury* (1918).

14 July 1918 Salterns

John is making good, but I'm in a horrible state, comparable only with my adolescence.

We came out of our sturdy vital world into this placid malevolence. There it was bad—[Poppy] Vanda worked on by Eleanor—but this—no getting hold of it anywhere. Microcosm of the world's state of being after 4 years of War. And we might have such a time!

■ ■ ■

I knew that I hung
In a wind-rocked land,
Nine long nights
With a spear wounded.
And to Odin offered
Myself to myself
[Keary,] *The Heroes of Asgard*

20 August 1918

John & I came back [to London]. He was restless—ill—all his ribs shewed when he stripped.

21 August 1918

He went to Petersfield. Left me alone with Strindberg['s *Inferno*].

22 August 1918

Finished the *Inferno*. Dreadful sense—not unmixed with pride that my own life is written there also.

One must accept it all, or not at all. Strindberg never made up his mind.

Either there are exterior daimones or a demon in you. Or both. Or our senses are 'kidding' us. He wanted to believe—so he believed what we saw in the Inferno. Could he have been his 'Dark Tower' in any other shape? A rebours.

The right book came his way at the right moment. So to me. Also the little signs—crossed sticks.

A correspondence between the objective & subjective life.

The time comes—one speaks what is in one's heart—formulates it—to the right mind.

On instinct one springs back—there are other doors.

Not through black magic, occultism, the Catholic faith—that world exists—but only the ethical preoccupations.

Is it enough to say that what Strindberg saw was either there or it was not? Obscure need may have created it.

But it cannot have been there & not there—apart from him. He does not know himself.

Yet why am I convinced that I shall get this clear in the right time—words, a sudden shifting & clearing. ‡ ‡Yes

Eleanor Initiation.

Love—which was to bring her to the good life. Abject failure. Answered by incredible malice—a hate that was also love, vice versa.

The hate she let loose equivalent to the hatred of all good let loose on the world—of which the fighting is a symbol—

I looked for reconciliation, then for escape. Pursued—even up till today. Not finished. Not to resist—neither Eleanor nor DORA [Defense of the Realm Act] submission—a hard word—quietism.

28 August 1918

On Sunday. Fell asleep "in fairy thrall" [Tennyson, "The Lady of Shalott"]. Then that great knock—terror. When I went into the kitchen still dazed with sleep, full of formal courtesies—I was alone. Behind me the gas ring roared, under the running tap the earth ran off the potatoes. I stood surrounded by the elements. In the studio they played [Debussy's] "L'après-midi d'un Faune." The fear became ecstacy—I almost saw.

A block of stone—loosened & exfoliated into the petals of a lotus—closing together till the petals become stone.

12 September 1918

John at breakfast: "O, for a night with Cleopatra"—while I thought the night had been so good—a quick exchange of bodies, silent—sleep!

John's platonism—of every quantity innate—but he adds inevitably asserting itself. There I dissent. Mysticism of the stockbroker.

Tony & Yanko together—a postcard.[8] The ingredients for a complete reassurance. The boy was not left comfortless.

Fear again—what is it this complete English fear? Fear of mysteries—of sailing out beyond those strait channels of our sea buoyed & charted by the Elder Brethren of 'Trinity House.'

On each side "the dragon-green, the luminous, the dark, the serpent-haunted . . ." [Flecker, "The Gates of Damascus."]

Last night a dull thrusting terror—squeezing the life out of me as it backed me into a corner. Neither substantial nor insubstantial. The [Russian] ballet hardly cured it.[9]

There is a comfort in the growth of our friendships—my vanity is tickled, my loneliness soothed & assuaged by my growing ability to produce myself—to affect an agreeable combination with John, to look up & try my laugh with lifted chin & strained throat—to manage my eyes, my voice.

I know how it's done. They—like it!

I have found good will of the purest & innumerable free meals & ballet tickets. It is all good.‡ One must not say—here is evil, & deny to the good the quality we ascribe to the bad. Nor question perpetually the nature of absolute values.

‡9 March 1921. It has remained.

Yet—*cor meum iniquitum est*—I must do what Yanko does & salute life. Any mystical person would tell me to accept anguish thankfully because it came from God. How much rather salute it as being life.

Salute to adventure though it be not all my adventure. It is going to be enough.

[8] At this stage in Tony Butts's life he is still bisexual. He is attracted to men (he later lives with the South African writer William Plomer); however he is unhappy about his homosexuality. He explains his position to Glenway Wescott, with whom he has an affair in 1923. See Introduction as well as Tony Butts to Wescott and Wescott to Monroe Wheeler correspondences in the Wescott papers.

[9] Series of Russian Ballets which Diaghileff revolutionised and brought over to England during the Great War. Butts is enraptured—they make a lasting impression on her as a writer. "And there was the Ballet once, which alone makes it worth while to have been born in this 'lost and imbecile century.' If it hadn't been for it, should we ever have recovered from the War?" Butts to Angus Davidson, undated [November 1933], Butts papers.

Perhaps I am also afraid lest certain teachings of the powers should divorce me for ever from my candour, elegance, & the fullness of my senses. This also is fear. I saw the image of the old Faun.

[Norman Douglas,] *South Wind.*

16 September 1918

Last night—in the Park. The old trouble—I make demands—so does he [Rodker], inimical to each other.

As he said—it is good to be with you—while you would have it that I could live without you, but find it heaven to be with you. So we worked on to our compromise—then I picked up my double burden again. The crux for me is—I shall be left with some surplus energy—(if I don't use it all in leaving him alone) am I to use it as I please independent of him? I'd better: But my cowardice that night asked for his sanction—I asked him to let me go then & he was furious—first rather sad & reasonable—then purely abominable.

It was as the bus swung round by Arthur's Corner that I divorced him. Then—I was very hurt, & there was an enormous half moon to illustrate London, I learned our limitation one with another, the stopped road. There may be others—but as we crossed the Harrow Road I said—"It's all right—I will be brave, I will take my chance." I said it to him, humbly, impersonally, & he hated me in silence. But I'm going to do it. It is not an equitable bargain that I should deny my need to make demands on him, forego that adventure, & then be equally condemned by him for fitting the rest of my life where I can.

I shan't forget—

I will do just what I want to do—& shoulder the double pack—epitomise the history of my sex. My pity is not going to blind me. It is not his fault or mine. Why do I find courage so hard? I wanted safety with him, assurance. Perhaps—oh I'm forced into it again.

Last night he would not speak to me—this morning all gaiety & tenderness. I must play the old game. As he will. There are better ways.
I will be brave—I will take my chance. ‡

‡Paris 9 March 1921. I have.

20 September 1918

On Tuesday I went out to dine with Fitz [Taylor]. There it was I recognised my daimon. ‡

‡Now we meet every other day.

It has been good, such an accompaniment of good friends as we have here. Yanko & Anwil, Mark Gertler, Hester [Sainsbury] & Khori, Rudolph—all men but one.[10] It's a lovely undersong to our two bodies & the strict injunction which keeps us to our work. Play finished last night. Bad news—Grant Richards.[11] But such peace with John.

I am beginning to trace the cycles of my life.

21 September 1918

There is no such thing as man & woman—but there is sex—a varying quantity.

Yesterday, on Chesterton's crit. that no one knows the cause of the change in woman—[12]

Wherever there has been an upper strata of society where the bare needs of life were automatically satisfied there has been a class of free or insurgent women. A woman 'question' or no need for one.

[A] woman's jobs.

(i) children
(ii) home—food, clothes.
(ii) has been taken out of her hands as a sex—growth of middle class & artisan class i.e. spread of ease. One job passed out of her hands as a sex. All to the good—reproducing what has always been in aristocratic society.

Now nearly all women want what once one class had. She has no longer become vital to keep things going. Must find new fields to conquer.[13]

Drudgery for its own sake no solution.

Discovery that childbearing is 3 parts unnecessary work to the de-

[10] Anwil (unidentified). Mark Gertler (1891–1939), Jewish painter, friend of John Rodker and Gilbert Cannan. Hester Sainsbury, dancer and poet, member of the Choric School, which perfomed experimental, often silent "dance poetry." See 5 November 1916. Sainsbury was a friend of Rodker's through his ex-partner the dancer Sonia Cohen. The Japanese dancer Khori (unidentified) was Sainsbury's lover at this time. Rudolph may be Rudolph Rocker, neighbour and political associate of Rodker in the 1910s. See Patterson, "Cultural Critique and canon formation," 43.

[11] Grant Richards, a publisher. Richards may have rejected "Dangerous" ("Unborn Gods") or Butts's play "Fantasy," see 1916 note 25.

[12] Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874–1936), British poet, novelist, journalist and essayist. Became a Catholic in 1922.

[13] Butts had already explored this extremely complex and still-vexing feminist conflict between motherhood and personal development in her unpublished 1910s novel, "Dangerous" ("Unborn Gods"), where Margaret leaves her child (to be brought

struction of its creative element. Lesson learned from co-op production—foreign trade. Now left with a lot of free time. Search for vital occupation.

The function of motherhood does not consist in changing napkins [diapers].

If men will not solve our problems for us—they must leave us free to do it for ourselves.

John is fair—bloody irritating, but pitifully fair.

■ ■ ■

There are no entries between this and the next entry in early December 1918. There is, therefore, no record of the end of the Great War . . . But see 20 July 1920.

7 December 1918

Idleness—since 'flu. Should do reviewing if only to keep me to it. None to do. Will keep this [journal] then.

In objet d'art I first began to understand 'significant form.'

(Form—shape plus colour, plus everything else)

Roger Fry* analogy in painting. Now half seen in letters. If a painting must not be literary, a writing must not be literary either. Objectivity, realism a means—finally the over soul, the pure form.

8 December 1918

The old 'penniless' fear. Finished "The Saint."[14]

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up by an aunt in Cornwall) in order to "find new fields to conquer," in her case, anthropological studies in Greece. As Margaret explains to her husband: "I'm not a maternal woman one bit. I've no instinctive feeling for babies, and I've sacrificed three golden months to that greedy little devil already. All my interests are focused on the time when her intelligence starts developing apart from her stomach. There are thousands of women like me. Only I've the means to escape from it, and the decency to be frank about it. That's all. Oh, don't look like that! Love her? Why of course I do. In some ways parting will be a pitiful wrench. Only I'm a human being." "Dangerous" typescript, Blondel private papers, 234. Like so many of her female contemporaries (e.g. H.D.), Butts chooses her development as a writer over her responsibility as a parent. While this is a fraught question, she and other women are still unfairly seen as *more* blameworthy than their male counterparts.

[14] "The Saint" clearly inspired by Mew's poem "Madeleine in Church" (see 30 November 1916) was included in Butts's first collection of stories, *Speed the Plough and Other Stories* (1923).

10 December 1918

"John."

"Yes."

"You remember the stile on the Weald?"

"Yes."

"It has come true."

Then we talked of the evil clairvoyance. . . . In his room among the fetiches, when it was over. Belovéd Jimmy [Rodker].

11 December 1918

Queer state of nerves. I could sleep all day & I dream all night. Sexual excitement, tears, depression. No work done. Nearly 28 & no work done.

The Ballet [Russe]. Picus—

The Midnight Sun [*Soleil de Nuit* (Massine [debut]—Rimsky-Korsakov—Larionov) (1915)].[15]

Bird—tree sanctities.[16]

12 December 1918

Last night—Ballet.

Erewhon 'revisited.' A tiresome man [Samuel] Butler. Would so soon be without him as with him. *La Faustin*—notes for a novel just like the de Goncourts.

15 December 1918

Tony—ballet. *Carnaval* [(Fokine—Schumann—Bakst) (1910)], *Schéhérazade* [(Fokine—Rimsky-Korsakov—Bakst) (1910)] many tears, because I was with him again.

Polyandry a most natural affair.[17]

But John would be injured. Is it one to ignore? I have a grievance

[15] Where known, I add the names of the choreographer—composer—designer after each ballet title.

[16] Butts's interest in bird (Picus) and tree-sanctities stems from her reading of Frazer and Harrison; she often 'translates' these ancient deities and spirits into her writing in contemporary situations, e.g., "Picus Tracey," the name she gives to a character in her novel *Armed with Madness*. Indeed it is often because she associates a contemporary with these mythical beings that they inspire her, e.g., Roy Martin. See Heath, Introduction to *Armed with Madness*, xiii–xiv.

[17] Butts is reading Jung. See 26 December 1918.

I may just deceive him—Roger Fry not a vulgarian—But I love John so. Why should I have to choose?

I shall have to "meet that fearful test."

16 December 1918

A most tired day. The perpetual reenactment of Tony's death—be it a safety valve? I am quite convinced he'll live to a gay middle age.[18]

At Val [Goldsmith?]'s—Songs.[19] [John Wilson's nineteenth-century ballad] "Turn ye to me."

Yeats' *Shadowy Waters* [(1906)].

Minstrel's songs in [Yeats'] *Deirdre* [(1907)].

To be bought: Yeats' *Poems* 2nd Series [(1909)].

20 December 1918

"I will be brave. I will take my chance." 'Life more life,' i.e. it is necessary to my nature to follow a certain course.

(i) for a satisfaction through experience (a drômenon to come out of impulse.[20] The Word made flesh.)

(ii) because a denial of my impulse would throw doubt on my courage, spoil my nerve.

Hence—I invent moral reasons or 'spiritual' for my proposed course (polyandrous). Once I'm convinced of them—then comes the elan, the setting free. The inhibition once removed, I pursue the satisfaction quietly—(even to ultimate indifference). By which it might seem that Roger may be only a symbol whose real nature I do not understand.

My indignation over John & his old ladies. Idem Roger Fry.

One must be free from the parent—equally also from lover or husband, (but art is the God you have not seen).

Tony at Salterns that night, Nietzsche's young shepherd.[21]

So all life is a perpetual freeing of one's vital energy (élan vital) from the forces which inhibit it.[22]

[18] Actually, Tony Butts commits suicide in 1941 at the age of forty.

[19] Major Val Goldsmith, unidentified friend. Butts also sees him in Paris where she comments on the suicide of his wife.

[20] For drômenon, see Glossary.

[21] See Friedrich Nietzsche, *So Spoke Zarathustra*, Chapter XLVI.

[22] Elan vital: see 1917 note 3.

26 December 1918

Elan lapsed—depression & irritation—libido introverted. Have done little else than read Jung [*Psychology of the Unconscious*, trans. Hinkle, (1916)]—I think that I am a fair example of libido rising freely into the conscious.

There is the good life.

"Abstinence sows sand all over
Thy ruddy limbs & flaming hair
But desire gratified
Plants fruits & seeds of beauty there."
[Blake, *Manuscript Notebooks*]

All asceticism but an introversion of libido.

Bored with Roger Fry. (So he was with me.) John & Yanko have roused my impersonal sex hate. We—now our house is in view—can hardly stand the last month of close contact here.[23]

An attack of furious sexuality between the elan & the depression. Which last may be pregnancy.

My body & shapeless horror while the men sit round with a sentimental grin!

("Shapeless" used commonly from a shape which departs from a conventional standard of fitness—not amorphous.) I would like it so much as I detest it.

Talked over play with Harold [Monro].[24] All said.

28 December 1918

I believe I am pregnant. To-day I have tried to understand my feelings about maternity. My job—I am tonight, if this is true, a woman in dis-

[23] Butts and Rodker move into a maisonette at 43 Belsize Park Gardens, Hampstead, London (round the corner from 1 Glenilla Studios) in the spring of 1919. Stella Bowen refers to a large party they hold in May 1919 which she attends with Ford Madox Ford. See Bowen to Ford, 7 May 1919, *The Correspondence of Ford Madox Ford and Stella Bowen*, ed. Stang and Cochran (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 125.

[24] Harold Monro (1879–1932), publisher and poet. Best remembered for The Poetry Bookshop, which he opened in 1913. He published *Georgian Poetry* anthologies and founded *The Poetry Review*.

tinction from a man. But I detest men as distinct from women. In the world I live in motherhood has become a sentimental slavery.

I feel this—the accidental quality of becoming a mother is worth more to them than all that is me—wit, looks, compassion, chiefly my power to do the same work as they. I want to write—I can write. My creating is to be out of my mind. If my men were to acknowledge that—I could throw in a baby or so. I want a child.

But I will not endure their attitude. Mostly subconsciously I am "doing the right [thing]" at last. It will keep me quiet for a time, & for doing it I may receive certain favours & attentions.

Restocking of the earth a becoming attitude!

I wish they would understand that it is not worth doing unless out of it came more philosophy, more art. I mean that girl children & mothers are to have more to do in life than reproduce themselves & be nice to their men.

Subconsciously that is all the best of them want us for—as unspoken derision. "Ah, lady, that will settle you."

But I want a child.

Unspeakably & unreasonably I detest John.

My God, I do nine tenths of the work, & out of his lordly leisure he is glad to think of me tied to the soil at last.

1919

1 January 1919 [1 Glenilla Studios]

Peace with Roger & John. Finance very bad.

3 January 1919

Yesterday to [Russian ballet] *Prince Igor* [(1906) Fokine—Borodin—Bakst]. I want to hide—never have I felt so separate.

I know nothing about writing. John's criticism at last understood—my poems all rot. I dislike people—at last I am separate—John goes off pleased on his male games. Now I am really alone. That is good.

Clairvoyance, utter transparency of walls & pavement. An 'intellectual thing.'

Only in Homer have I found impersonal consolation—a life where I am unsexed or bisexed, or completely myself—or a mere pair of ears.

10 January 1919

Next day that blessed haemorrage & a relief of the nerves which is indescribable. Ever since I have crept back to life, making objective my 'crises de nerfs.' Dread about our poverty—the actual taking out of money I shall be able to pay back in a month.

[Apurva Kuma] Chanda's prayer—he told me in the cinema that all men & beasts may be tranquil & satisfied—I echoed it—a far-off echo very pure & remote.[1]

But hatred gets hold of me.

14 January 1919

Yesterday Nevinson's & a sexual triumph. To-day I could cry & cry.

Why these three months, no work & perpetual tears?

Nina [Hamnett] in a ring of light. There is the perfect way to love. I do not want to see her—least of all by myself. I know her "sins, negligence & ignorances" [*Book of Common Prayer*], but I have no pleasure like the quick remembrance that she is alive or the waiting for her to come into the same room.

[1] Apurva Kuma Chanda, Indian student. Chanda visits Butts in Cornwall, see 29 August 1936.

Greeks & Russians
Cruelty & compassion
John the Platonist.

17 January 1919 In Cornwall.

I worry about money—I used to worry lest my sexual escapades were found out. Now I need not—so the irritation 'running free' expresses itself there.

There is no winter here. Life never creeps underground or is bitten shut by the frost—all day driving the rainbow did not leave the sky.

Roger ought to be here.

How my nerves would quiet if we slept together once or twice, cemented our friendship in the most objective way, & settled down to our intimacy. John only wants me to be quiet, quiet & slightly decorative. . . .

A spell of quiet adoration & adequate money. Am I losing the power to be alone?

To work. To work.

20 January 1919

I am glad because of my sexual adventures before marriage. They have prevented me from taking marriage with John as a supreme irritation—I may have missed an ecstacy to gain a clear understanding. I am saved from becoming mere producer of my men. A great deal of the sex business is pure irrelevance. We had to read [H. G. Wells'] *Joan and Peter* [(1918)].[2] Except for some comments & vignettes, sentimental bunkum. Joan gets it all from her 'Petals' & so re-proves the old sanctities.

21 January 1919

"Ladies & Gentlemen, I will now explain to you the difference between men & women." They were willing—these two boys [John and Yanko]—to move to the other bungalow, & failing Mrs Levenna, let me cook & clean & arrange & order while their lordships played chess & waited for

[2] *Joan and Peter: the Story of an Education* focuses on two adolescents, Joan Debenham and Peter Stubland, and presents England as in a phase of transition between 1893 and 1918. Butts is remarking on the conservativism of the account since Peter, who has sexual experience, marries his 'true love' Joan, who has none . . .

inspiration. They forgot that it was my holiday my respite from these things, my working time. I do not love them at all. We were overeaten today with roast pork—& in Europe they starve—they starve.

31 January 1919

Ashe of Rings goes well. As though I remembered it.

Sex war progresses. Via Yanko. They will have it so, even our men. Focused round [Kristian] de Bergen & Nina.[3]

"But if Kristian were to kill Nina, he would still be Kristian." This from Yanko. But Nina would not be Nina. They still want us to be there, for them & only for them.

And they grumble at the "sex war" & at our "trade union." We need one.

8 February 1919

So many exquisite things that one does not write down—the green rocks where the water would be over our heads. Yellow shells. The church that has been hated. One's mind may keep them but I must make my analysis on paper, or my mind will not be cured. Complexes that have troubled me.

(i) Fear of my own failure. Image—Tony's premature death. There I dramatised the early death of my talent. Hence (i) a sense of unreality even when I wept over my darling's early fate. ‡ ‡Cured.

It is extraordinary the inhibition that arises when one tries to write these down.

(ii) Suppressed veneration for my rank—birth—horror of the L.L.[4] That I etc. could have been his mistress. A man, 'not a gentleman'—Irritation where I should smile indifferently. ‡ ‡Cured.

(iii) Internal conflict over the question whether I should have another lover beside John. No logical reason. ‡ ‡9 March 1921 Settled.

[3] Roald Kristian, Count Edgar de Bergen, briefly married to Nina Hamnett. Rodker's Ovid Press published his *Bestiary* in 1919.

[4] "L.L.:" This is unclear. It is a reference to Butts's sexual relationship with Hal T. (full surname unknown) who was clearly of a lower social class. See 19 January 1920. "L.L." may refer to "Low Lots," see 26 January 1920.

Fear: fear of breaking taboo, fear of hurting him—fear of losing him.

It all centres round the physical act, which is wholly absurd.

I have "committed adultery in my heart" [Matthew 5, 28] with Roger & there I cannot feel that I have done wrong. Yet it is not so much Roger as the general question.

All my sexual—or affectionate—libido cannot centre round John. He only needs a limited supply. Subconsciously "I am tormented in this flame" [Luke 16].

John is greater than I. He does not need love in such quantities.

"Where some great work is to be accomplished before which weak man recoils . . . his libido returns to that source—& this is the dangerous moment between annihilation & new life. . . . If the libido remains arrested . . . then he is practically dead or desperately ill. But if the libido succeeds in tearing itself loose, & pushing up into the world alone, there a miracle appears." Jung, [*Psychology of the Unconscious*]. ‡

‡It appeared. The book is written [*Ashe of Rings*]. The Great Work.[5] 9 March 1921. I have my lover [Maitland].

It is this—I feel that John belongs to the order of things which would destroy me. So I dramatise Nina's death at the hands of Yanko & Kristian. But I am the victim. And I must stop this introversion.

16 February 1919

(John says that if I lived 1,000 years I would not know then if I loved him as much as I thought I did.

On the other hand—)

19 February 1919

It cuts two ways.

I. Times in the past where I have not 'adapted myself to environment' often trivial affairs. These rankle "like a worm in a bud" [Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*]—small gaucheries—childish miseries, infantile unfulfilled desires.

II. Something desperately, definitely wrong with the main course of my life, a really frustrated libido. This works out in ways which have nothing (so far as I can tell) with *I.*, but in remote 'substitution' (i.e. dread of being without money), or in the general anxiety feeling—malaise.

[5] See 22 February 1921.

I. What is interfered with here is the ideal presentiment of oneself. We all have one. Our pattern laid up in paradise. The romantic idea of Mary Butts which cannot be reconciled with her wearing the wrong hat, being found out 'shewing off' etc.

II. Is deeper. My life has been a great adventure, my conspicuous failure has been my love affairs.

I have poured out an immense quantity of libido which has met with a poor reception.

Some I have sublimated, but there remains a residue unresolved into any other form of expression.

α DW [unidentified woman] unresolved—(school & college affairs)
β MBS [Margaret Boyd Shleselmann] (unresolved)
γ 'LL' [Hal T.] (not so deeply involved)
δ (also partly written off in "Unborn Gods" ["Dangerous"])
ε Eleanor unresolved?—but out of it came such deep emotional experience, I rationalised & philosophised so much of the wasted emotion, that I feel myself at least partly 'cured.' Also Poems.
ζ 'Agnes Helen'—the same applies, also "Unborn Gods" unburdened me.
All women but γ!
So far as I can judge α & β (with childish excuses) may have been the worst.
This leads to ζ John.
θ Edwin resolved written off, also through ecstacy.
ι Porter—a slight business—it comes under *I.*—a mortification.
κ Roger—shelved, but in process of enjoyment—I had better not fail there. ‡
λ Tony
μ This leads up to my own true hate, my mother.

‡I did, but it did not matter. 9 March 1921.

30 March 1919

Another explanation. As a female animal—social training of centuries added John—I submit to men. I try & please them—'cock an eye for approval,' am worried if I do not please them, or must not please them. This apart from my reason, my clear affection—a brutal physical fact. It shames me. It shames very many women (who sensually enjoy their irrational

abasement.). However free we think ourselves, we are caught that way each time—most times.

Thus the woman who goes into a convent. The woman who gives syph[illis] to every man she can.

John's example—"I don't care who approves my work or disapproves. You cannot do without approval."

There is a difference in nature. God help me.

■ ■ ■

22 April 1919 [1 Glenilla Studios, London]

The spring has caught Fitzroy St [Roger Fry lived at no. 21].

I understand now why arts & philosophies are well lost for the sensuality of certain kisses—Roger I adore, A [unidentified]—not in any way but for his looks—but with him pleasure reached its quintessence.

■ ■ ■

3 June 1919

Two months spent in hard living. Time to sum up experience since Cornwall.

(i) The nature of magic more apparent. A focusing point where reason & intuition meet. [Eliphas] Lévi's *The History of Magic* [trans. Waite (1913)] analysed.[6] There a disappointment, but for that incomparable meditation of the Buddha. Corrected by Roger's rationalism, not superseded.

More vital here my friendship with Philip [Heseltine], who rationalises, but does not rationalise away.[7]

[6] Eliphas Lévi, pseudonym of Alphonse Louis Constant (1810–75), defrocked priest who believed in the development of an empowering occult science enabling the adept to work miracles, which competed with religious miracles. Lévi's work greatly influenced the French surrealist André Breton.

[7] Philip Heseltine/Peter Warlock (1894–1930), composer and magician. Possibly introduced to Butts by Rodker, whose poem "Twilight" Heseltine set to music in 1916. See Heseltine to Delius, 11 October 1916, in Cecil Gray, *Peter Warlock: A Memoir of Philip Heseltine* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), 134 and Crozier, *Poems and Adolphe 1920*, xiv.

Philip last night made a curious distinction—the uprush of power which is in your own nature, & 'possession' by a good spirit, inspiration. (Or by an evil spirit.) I feel a mistake, at least a misstatement here.

—a sense of certain objects charged with their past, or as foci for will—a worn farthing. These things easily forgotten as not part of the active brain's proper preoccupation.

—a perpetual apprehension of the relations of objects, sensual or emotional. That everything that is has its answer & correspondence in the depths & shallows of all nature. I cannot think of an example! They rise like bubbles & break.

(ii) The book [*Ashe of Rings*] a difficult labour but is coming well. Grasp of the technique of free association of ideas, plus a structural unity.

(iii) The sexual will. I have realised that so much of the neurasthenia of these months has been the suppression of understanding of my real relations with John.

Fitz [Taylor] made me drink, & as so often, out of wine came truth.

John does not want me so much as I want him—or our intensity in love—to say nothing of our demonstration of it—is at a different ration. It sounds simple. It has taken me nine months (the time of pregnancy) to realise it.

Now the conception is born. The conclusions have all been written down before John—I will have my lover—I will have Roger & other men with whom the relation will be noble, & John shall have his peace, & I do not think one fraction less of love than he wants. With this there comes a sense of the priestly nature of love—very comforting, I hope true.‡

But the agony of detaching my desire from so loved an object. That comes back. That will come back. But there is a way of escape—or rather a way to go in & out.

‡21 November 1919 True! But how impossible!

Life flies past, & I run with it. Yet am conscious of a stability which may outlive life.

Here Butts copies out the last verse (lines 69–78) of T. S. Eliot's "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" (1917).[8]

[8] Butts incorporates a quotation from this poem in her novel *Armed with Madness*, The Taverner Novels, 32.

In my relations with men I shall meet this continually—that, though they admire, tho' they are sexually attracted, they do not want my extreme vitality.

"Men do not like clever women."

"Why don't you settle down?"

"A little of me goes a long way."

It has taken me several broken hearts to know that this means—there's more divine life in me than in any man I've known. That's why I lose them. That's why there is no peace with John.

But we've no money & he wants me to be dull. He will not praise or stimulate. He does not want the divine life in me.

19 June 1919

Sex Antagonism [(1913)], Heape's critique on Frazer's *Totemism & Exogamy* [(1910)].[9]

That exogamy is a male attempt to secure his free sexual choice—totemism the female attempt to limit it & establish family life—& restricted intercourse.

Hence the primitive sex war—environment favouring one party or the other at haphazard.

■ ■ ■

20 November 1919

Finished book [*Ashe of Rings*]. Begin this again. Sum up the course, nature & result of these experiences.

21 November 1919

New complex developed out of letter-reading complex. I cannot endure to look at my writing (or in a lesser degree John's) in print. I dislike to see my own in typescript. In print it is agony. So with much good modern work, e.g. Conrad. Though once I begin I cannot stop. Find it difficult though to pick up the book daily. Time chiefly for stories.

[9] Sir James George Frazer (1854–1941), British historian of "primitive" religion and a classical scholar. Best known for his ethnographic study *The Golden Bough* (1890), which attained general intellectual currency between the wars. A central influence on Butts's thought.

In development from this I cannot bear spoken criticism. Good or bad, e.g. Ezra [Pound] to-day, good & bad was torture. I called it "patronising." The word jumped.

As I squirm at the good it can't be all vanity.

Help!

8 December 1919

Summary of last year's diaries. States of mind.

I. The great fear. Rose out of life spent with Eleanor. At its maximum for the year before the last six months. Fits of fear, stupid passion & depression. Last before the curse. Getting gradually better—with lapses.
General health much improved. (Cause or effect).
One works in with the other:
The night I was surrounded by the elements.
Chanda.
Philip [Heseltine]. He rationalised, induced me into the study of magic. What I have not done is to rationalise the link between the theory of magic & my perception of the continuity of history & the studies made in psychology.

II. Jung & Freud. Have not drawn the parallels between I & II. Can they be drawn?
In summary I can say that I have advanced in perception outside the cinematograph of the senses.
Whether the advance is subjective or objective I am still doubtful, I mean whether what I have perceived has existence outside my imagination & independent of it.

III. Observation of relations between men & women. This has been mixed with my fits of passion. Then I perceive—no rather I have—sex antagonism. Acute. Generally it is a mental acceptance & realisation of the displacements rising from our functions—rising in moments to a fury, a malediction on all men, mixed with sexual feeling, allayed by intercourse. God, what muddle.

IV. Artistic development. Here a close analysis. Enormous developments . . . but I go blind for intervals. Now the book [*Ashe of Rings*] is finished I should have a theory—an analysis at least. Later.

V. Relations with the world.
I am a good acquaintance. I last. Not a good friend—intimately I belong only where I belong, & that circle is large, but with few stars in it. I am angry with pleasant persons for not being large stars. What can I expect!

VI. A rule of life. Want a thing. Fix on it. Quiet your fever. Let it go. It will return born in you. Not a desire, a possession. Nina. The good hostess.
(The limitations of intercourse. We brush one another & pass. Even John)

VII. "Free Love." Conclusions uncertain. Only possible—hence permissible—in rare states. Later it will come.

10 December 1919

For the last few years I have become gradually conscious of what appears a further reality linking phenomena, which can be observed. Not a perception so much as a series of events noted, a hint of rules. These are difficult to remember.

(i) That at the 'psychological' moment I came across the book, the information, even the experience & the person I should have most wished to enjoy. They rose like bubbles. Strindberg whom I had so long evaded.

(ii) A faculty that varied of knowing what event would succeed—especially when my emotion was violent about them.

(iii) I have noticed that when one is possessed by an event or a thought one sees, or would see comes upon its similitudes. ‡
Crossed sticks in the Rue Cardinal le Moine.[10]
There are the two sentences of initiation.
Cor ad cor loquitur.
Quod inferius est sicut quod superius.[11]
The similitudes of extremes.
The secret sympathy συμπατια τωυ ολωυ.
This business of the universal medium—in the case of

‡Doctrine of signatures, principle of correspondence. Hidden analogies that produce works of art.

[10] See 22 August 1918.

[11] Heart speaks to heart; motto adopted by Cardinal Newman (1879).
"All that is above is like that which is below, and all that is below is like that which is above." From Hermes Trismegistos, *Emerald Tablet* (late antiquity). See 10 March 1935.

telepathy—the thought is not transmitted by air, an agent is required.

I have seen Light in successions of white swags. The shimmering haze. A solvent.

(iv) Sophrosynê—le mot juste. The moment when one reaches the point of the union of opposites, one has a sense of mastery, an ease, a freedom, perfect freedom. One is then conscious of the state which is beyond good & evil. One sees that it is so.

(v) Will. Be quiet. Let go. Attain. This seems to be the rule of a cosmic game. I wish I knew more mathematics.

Be ye free from the pair of opposites. The Greek success, the Hellenic rhythm & pace is explained here. A people standing tiptoe on that point of union.

The most piteous gnomê: "The wise want love, & those who love want wisdom" [Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*]?

Technique of 'letting go.' Happens double—usually it is a physical intake of breath, a stilling of the body & a long breath out, one makes a formula. "Let it go, my Beauty, let it go." This to the raw, the gnawing state or event or memory of event. A period of unconsciousness, the thing seems to go both out, & in (to the subconsciousness). The result seems invariably, & generally described by a return of well-being, harmony, a creating state. In conversation, cross-purposes meet, break, flow into one another.

Or something amusing turns up in action.

There is another way when *cor ad cor loquitur*—not 'let it go' but 'put out.' One marches. This will develop. There have been no such weeks as these last. May I experience the pair of opposites in order to be free of them?

11 December 1919

I suppose I am now liable to produce an aesthetic. I can't review. John says mystically—"the only thing is to have a standard." I have no standard. Let us pray.

Good art, fashion apart, is the result of fusion between a subject & an expression or representation, Idea & Form. The word made flesh.

'Purposeful' literature & 'aesthetic.' ‡ ‡Aversions

But if ideas find their forms, forms can become ideas & start creating

on their own? General dribble. How do I feel I should write—now *Ashe* is finished?

12 December 1919

Choice—best shown in painting between realistic & stylistic method. Shall one 'put oneself into what one sees' or express the real in terms of one's formula. Like the best of us I'm sick of realism. I can do it down to the 'curl of the eyelash.'

I am not so sick as I should be of loveliness, mistaking it for beauty. ‡ I would start by saying that my good writing should be a parallel between a naked, sometimes raw object, seen & what Huysmans calls an over-soul. This oversoul is what was called the archetype, the idea corresponding to the sensual fact, a series of correspondences—the hermetic signatures—but not absolute, a series of becomings.

‡Beauty is T. S. Eliot's "eternal intensity" ["Imperfect Critics"]

13 December 1919

Twenty nine & hating it. Good writing is always a proportion, a harmonising of two opposites—i.e. close, even broken analysis of states of mind worked into a rhythm of pure continuity. An individual with a hint of society enclosing him ([Virginia Woolf's] *Night and Day* [(1919)]).[12]

Folly splashing—wearing away eternal wisdom. Irrelevance at the vital turn of the event. Rude saxon elegant Latin words. Drive these abreast.

But whatever phenomena are selected they must be treated in a primary manner (John's phrase). There is a question of the angle of perception & the test between first, & second rate, brilliant, 'amusing' work.

There is nothing which can be written about which may not be written about. All phenomena can be of primary importance. I dislike this 'plane of illusion' spirit. (Especially in painting this is clear.)

No work can be 'decadent' that treats any subject in this primary manner. Thus no great literature is decadent. Perhaps all secondary literature is!

In a universal, remote, unitive sense beauty is the end of art. It appears

[12] Adeline Virginia Woolf (1882–1941), British writer and publisher through her Hogarth Press. Member of the Bloomsbury Group. Despite their mutual suspicion, Woolf and Butts read and admire each other's writing. Woolf cites *The Crystal Cabinet* in *The Three Guineas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 146.

to be a rule of the game that to create it one must not aim at it direct.[13] Attend to shape, décor, truthful realism, anything, & if these are properly performed, beauty will result.

Escape professionalism & dilettantism.

On Thursday Millard came to dinner.[14] "Enter one Millard, a bugger."

A left-over from the nineties, well-bred, not very clever, lonely, sad, satirical—I offered him his coffee on my knees as to Wilde's ghost. He made me sensual in a Beardsley-compassionate way that was very intricate, a memory of adolescence & something more.[15] In *Night and Day* one sees how it is built up from the base of a triangle to its apex. Most literature especially erotic, good & bad like this, but here it is the two families, the antithetical lives.

14 December 1919

The last two days have been like wading a deep stream full of worms. Last night as I tried to 'pass it out' of me I fell asleep. A nightmare—

A chinaman who came into Fitz's room in the night & laid a knife over her. She felt the steel & its edge, heard the promise to return. He could not be seen coming in or going out. There was a horror here, continuity in what he said that I can't remember.

We were at Salterns, vainly, perpetually we discussed ways of escape. (She was a substitute for myself. Blandine [unidentified] would do nothing). Woke. The panes in the servants' bedrooms opposite were yellow—Cock-crow. In the dream I had just remembered that it had happened be-

[13] First mention of concept Butts will encapsulate in her term 'knight's move.' See 28 July 1929.

[14] Christopher Millard (1872–1927), secretary of Oscar Wilde's friend and executor, Robbie Ross, served a term of imprisonment during the war for homosexuality. Just starting a career as a secondhand bookseller; his first catalogue appeared in December 1919. While reading Symon's *Quest for Corvo,* Butts wrote: "And did you know Christopher Millard, who figures in it? I met him as a young women just married to J.R. [Rodker], not old enough to appreciate his scholarship & resentful at being snubbed because of my sex. While he gave J. R. Lévi's *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*—a marvellous edition. J.R. gave it to me, & it was one of my treasures, & in Paris, Sergey Sergeyitch stole it!" Butts to Angus Davidson, 4 February 1934, Butts papers.

[15] Fingal O'Flahertie Wills "Oscar" Wilde (1854–1900), Irish playwright, poet, novelist and wit. Famously remembered for his 1895 trial in which he was convicted of and imprisoned for homosexual acts. Aubrey Vincent Beardsley (1872–98), British illustrator and writer.

fore, but this time less definitely to Fitz. It was a visitation of a series. I got up to pee with enormous reluctance.

Second dream: An amourette with dark boy. I was the neglected, suspected wife of a teutonic gentleman of position. Pure ideal—reminiscent of *Song of Songs*—[play by Hermann] Sudermann.[16] Usual Freudian imagery, but what made it interesting was the emotion of ideal physical passion that accompanied it. If I saw him now, I should be in love with him. We didn't actually embrace—but I remember his kisses on the back of my neck more than many I have had given me.

15 December 1919

Depression.

Two biological aspects to man's relations. He is a member of the kingdom of this world with all other men. Their good is common. On the other hand, equally for his preservation's sake he is opposed to every creature. Another's gain is his loss.

His ego—in antitheses are not direct, but what centuries of religions to persuade us on the co-operative side have done is make it impossible for Tony or I to endure the brutalities of human competition—their plain manifestation or statement. People who lift that curtain make us angry, make us cry.

This explains a good deal of Eleanor. Fitz lifted the curtain. Tony cried. The truth is that Fitz has no objection especially now she is in business & money-making fast.

It is not that we have not our own egoisms—but we will not face the implications & results. Shall I suffer so now that I know why I have so suffered before?

Physically on a large scale, one has everything to gain by co-operation—it's one's creation in process that must be done alone. And Creation is what matters.

16 December 1919

Day with Helen Rowe [unidentified]. It has been rapture to know her but with it went a sense of inferiority that tormented through the pleasure. Beside her I know nothing, have done nothing, observed nothing, suffered

[16] "Song of Songs" is the alternative name for "Song of Solomon" from the Bible, which includes the line "I am black but comely" (1, 5) to which Butts is probably referring, given her dream.

nothing, am nothing. What is my eloquence & erudition beside her peaceful mots justes? Envy corrected itself by assuming in imagination the fairy role, restoring to her her child—I shall never be able to do it. I would sooner do it than anything in the world. I don't 'let go' with success.

I am dust, rather blessed dust, but this afternoon so overcome as to be glad to be rid of her. I ought to make her live here, I ought to take her child. But there is Joan already & my possible brat.

18 December 1919

Peacock feathers are dangerous to you if they are a symbol of evil in your imagination. Or rather this a question of the fancy, arbitrary.

The 'magician' goes further, assumes the objective existence of these phenomena, & might name the peacock a death-bird, i.e. certain objects picked out arbitrarily by your fancy, might if you decided on them, do you evil. Others perceived by the imagination have their nature settled willy nilly. I can't get a relative statement of this that flicked across my mind crossing Leicester Square this morning. A dancing concept outside the Automobile Club.

20 December 1919

Yesterday—Jack [White] came back. In half an hour we found our old continuity unbroken. There is a life everlasting. How did I find him? Jack determined to externalising that which is within, implied but seldom stated, of which the visible world is the signature, ignores a fact & a rule of the game.

Theoretically it is true that *quod superius sicut inferius*, but to infer a wave of the hand even an agony of the spirit & then immediate translation. Life does not happen like that. There are moments when one walks away & leaves it alone. There is also an errant principle, a comet, a female thing. There is that also in his Mercedes that will not let the sum come out right.

He does not understand that to reign, the initiate must let go.

I love that man. But he has borrowed our front room to commit suicide in on January 1st.

I hang up friendship's garland over his name.

Of the men & women I've known he has the most mystical power.

Now we meet, for the first time, with relative equality. Before I could read a little withal, knowing my letters.

22 December 1919

Yesterday—I had foreseen the white patch into which I should pass. I am in it now. With Ethel* [Colburn Mayne] on Sunday. It began. Last night it was not Pascal's "Fire."[17]

The world wrapped in a light mist with a ring, of stars overhead. 'Silver' "Chansons de Bilitis" [Debussy], music, an embrace. Flat at John's side. Words, Greek, a rhythm, a return to sleep. When I rode the mountain of my power he clung to me. We did not speak. He was holding on to my side, his chin under my right breast. I lay flat on my back. Outside the warm night rushed in.

To remember Greek life is not to adventure into a delicious ideal but to go home, to something so familiar that it can bore me. What was I called? Myrrhine? Panychin? Grande Courtisane de Chypre. Very well.

I go down or out & live it again. A lean girl—impudent. There is my home. I suck it like milk, & am sensual with it, & proud. John knows.

It goes with a heightened colour sense. I want those jade stockings with the silver fleur-de-lys. I saw the sky go pink & primrose & dull violet. I am not afraid of people in shops.

When I was a child I wanted to put everyone in the way of the good life. I could conduct little revivals à deux at school. Like a returning cycle the power is in me again. And I'm wiser. I could tell Ethel [Colburn Mayne]. The words were so hard, but it is like having a good dinner to cook, a job, something that can be put out with every part of my nature.

I'm not so afraid of being vain about it.

23 December 1919

Helen [Rowe]—John. The strange night. Afternoon in the cheap shop. End of peace.

25 December 1919 [Red Ford][18]

Ashe of Rings.

[17] The word "fire" (feu) was used by the French philosopher and writer Blaise Pascal (1623–62) to describe the intense religious experience he underwent on the night of 23 November 1654.

[18] Butts and Rodker spend Christmas 1919 with Stella Bowen and Ford Madox Ford, who are now living together in a cottage, Red Ford, in Coultham, Sussex. Butts shows *Ashe of Rings* to Ford, hoping that he will recommend it to Duckworth Press. To her lifelong chagrin, he does not.

26 December 1919

Complete misery. Walk with John. The hay-turning machine. The devil in the house.

27 December 1919

Ford. Amends—a kind of laying out to a mutilated corpse.

Back again [to London].

Albert Ray at the pictures.[19]

28 December 1919

Work.

29 December 1919

That last day at Coultham [Sussex] when I was so unhappy. We walked in the rain. We crossed that sogged field till we came to the three ricks. A mile to go & still the clouds streamed up. He [John] said "let's rest a little." I had cried to a God to pity me out loud in the field. I followed him to the seat under the tarpaulin of the thresher. From our feet there rose up against the sky (angle of 45°) a machine, I do not know the name. A tray of wood, lined with foot-long iron spikes, I think it carries up the hay, lightly on the points for drying & piling. The rain wet them till they shone. I looked out of the tarpaulin, & saw only the wooden trough—pinkish purple paint—& the long spikes rising. The trough did not end with the dark angry sky. The spikes pointed against it. Once they were started they would move round & round for ever like a tank. I was carried up on them, tossed & passed.

Jimmy, my Jimmy [Rodker].

That night he tucked me up in bed as my mother never did.

If a devil was in that Cottage [Red Ford] to injure us with such pain, he did not work mysteriously. There was no creeping awe, or 'atmosphere of horror.' Disagreement ran through & set us only at cross-purposes—DISCOMFORT.

I wish Ford did not tell so many lies.

"My dear," said Roger [Fry], "how did it take your critics? You say they all had fits. That is a very good sign—there is no better sign than for

[19] Albert Ray (d.1944), American actor, film director.

competent judges to become irrational, & declare that that sort of art has no business to be produced. It means there is something there. Allow me to read your book." He knelt down on the floor, put his arms round me & kissed me. I laid my cheek against his, let it be there. One forgives Roger anything for sympathy like that.

I had not thought of that. Yet it's so simple—knowing the rules of the game. Anyway it seems like part of the truth.

Ford's fundamentals of novel writing. The writer a priest.

I. Absolute detachment of the orator.
"To create a little like God."
It is there that I fail.

II. The "man of good will," the imaginary audience, a perfectly sympathetic perfectly intelligent & entirely ignorant Hottentot.

III. The novels as history of an Affair. No irrelevancies.
There I am fairly sound.

IV. Lastly & more debatable. As pathological states usually end in death, the novel should not concern itself with them.
No literature of madness.

I am learning a little better what should come out of love & hate.

1920

1 January 1920 [43 Belsize Park Gardens]

After that party. We never gave a better. Blot, blot, blotto. Paul Johnston [unidentified]. Fate. "Do you see the moon is sinking?" Helen, Helen, Helen of Troy.

In my bath this morning, (the ritual bath though I have now no salts or scents or powder) I lay flat, & when I sat up & stirred the water, I saw bobbing down towards the drain the patch which had sat under my shoulder-blades the long tumultuous night.

Stuff for a little story.

I read Turgenieff's *Lear of the Steppes*. First story very good. Second bad—interesting material skimmed. Third—male observation of himself curious. But the first is a masterpiece.

4 January 1920

Last night the vile malaise. Again that irruption of evil potency prosaically working. There is nothing more matter of fact than the operation of this other world (if it is another world). I was distraught to madness—woke with a cold. A morning's chill misery. Then I went to Sal [B.—unidentified]'s flat off St Stephen's Square, my martyrdom, my stoning. I was ill & wretched. They read me their stories. They spoke about mine. I took courage, talked about *Ashe of Rings*, well at first, badly towards the end—or weaker. But they were held. 'Sympathy' of my own generation. There is virtue in one's time spirit. Half a dozen words were enough & [Cecil] Maitland's* eyes—I left them well, gay, quickened even to my moving about the cold streets. Quickened in the house, over dinner, & menage, & talk. I got my play [unidentified]—I floated about the streets in the black transparent dark. I found [Wyndham] Lewis's letter, found Fitz [Taylor] engaged, which freed me from the old Fitz & handed her back, put Jimmy [Rodker] to bed.[1] Cuddled him. £10 came from America. £50 from Ezra promised.[2] Our world wheeled over & is spinning off.

[1] Butts has received a note from Lewis apologising for not being able to attend their New Year's party and suggesting that he draw her. See Lewis to Mrs Rodker [Mary Butts], 4 January 1920, Butts papers. She goes on 9 January. The portrait has not been traced. Fitz and her husband Peter Taylor, wealthy friends of Butts, living at 9 Taunton St, London.

[2] Money promised to fund Rodker's Ovid Press. The press also received £25 from May Sinclair, £75 from Dan Ingram, while Butts raised the major capital of £600 on

In that miserable place an equal satisfaction—(ten minutes to 3 years) occurred. From the bubble of opposites was formed not nothing but a new creature—Energy. It has no name.

I am egocentric, but I love my kind—& where have I found, where does any one find another to equal in intensity oneself?

7 January 1920

Followed—out the trail with Maitland-Gilles de Retz again.[3] Maitland—I am either a very bad character reader or he has changed. A Russian character, there's ferocity in him, but a push might land him in good will. He drinks because he likes it. Such a little push, & the eyes beseeching. He slaves for Sally. I see myself projecting myself as a light & health-shedder over blighted lives. What mawkish vanity. What unsophistication. There is something I can do.

'Agnes-Helen' sent me a letter to day for the first time for three years.[4]

There was one cigarette in the japanese box. The moon endureth [reference to Psalm 7, 2].

9 January 1920

The energy hasn't gone, but I'm like a child spoilt with parties. How a little happiness can wear me out. It's harder to stand than grief. But it's a little harvest after these patient rainy years. Wyndham Lewis is the first man I have met whose vitality equals, probably surpasses mine. But he manages it badly—like a great voice badly produced. He is the most male creature I've met. I can just keep going with him—or rather have just got going with him. And now look at the damned thing!

A pleasure to be raped by him. Yes, that's true.

New idea for short story—it's the magazine note. A woman alone in a studio half asleep. Outside she sees her enemy's projected will feeling

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her own estate. Texts published in 1920 include T. S. Eliot, *Ara Vos Prec*, Edward Wadsworth, *The Black Country,* Wyndham Lewis, *Fifteen Drawings,* Rodker, *Hymns,* and Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley.* Butts also often set the type. Dorothy Richardson thought that Rodker left Butts to do all the work. See Richardson to Peggy Kirkaldy, 6 November 1943, Richardson papers, and 4 February 1920.

[3] Gilles de Retz, fifteenth-century French nobleman, soldier and black magician.

[4] "Agnes Helen" [real name unknown.] Reference to Westfield college friend/lover, the inspiration for Agnes Helen Ormonde in "Dangerous."

about the window. It gets in to destroy the portrait. A will content to save the picture. Attack divested on to her person. The 'ring of light.' Victory over it, a near thing. Re-enter artist. Explanation, support, a complete embrace. All in the dusk turning to dark, on a dirty floor, by a fire. Pure magazine. Could anything be done.[5]

Paul [Johnston?] too. I am keeping seven balls in the air. They will drop & the turn will end. They will be thrown again. I am beginning to master the elementary gymnastic of recurrence.

10 January 1920

"Into the darkness that lies at the root of the mountains" [Keary, *The Heroes of Asgard*].

First it was the cadence that pleased, semi-conscious repetitions. Then when I was sitting [for Lewis] tried improvement. "In the darkness at the roots of the mountains." "At" not "of." Aesthetic cadence v. just cadence. Not so stimulating. Rag time to good ballad.

It wound itself about my mind, & came out into what I probe for with Wyndham Lewis.

"Into the darkness at the roots of the mountains."

It is like going down his deep area steps. He comes out. There it is.

Mem[orised]. for speech to Bill [original owner of Rodker's press].

"Look here. We are doing our best. The business is very poor & struggling. We have no capital. Give us time etc."

(Got it said, a little toned down, not so injured. Bill moved to tears at the time.)

13 January 1920

I have the makings—the materials to hand—collected from a miserable youth—for a severe, entrancing, witty, profound middle-life. (Not 'age' yet.) I am learning my trade. I am twenty-nine. I have red curls, I have cut, well I think all, allow for some of my wisdom teeth. I have recentred my ego outside my cadaver. I am learning to taste what I swallow. I am find-

[5] Butts incorporates part of this idea into *Ashe of Rings.* As for her actual sitting for Lewis, it is probably the inspiration for her story "Magic" *The Little Review,* 7, 2 (July–August 1920), 3–6. (This same issue printed an extract from James Joyce's *Ulysses.*) Never republished. Ian Patterson rightly comments on it as a response to Woolf's 1917 story "The Mark on the Wall." Patterson, "Cultural critique and canon formation," 133–7.

ing formulae for non-essentials, defining first principles. I can dance. I was never so handsome. My work is getting known, & my personality to illustrate it. I can write this for the benefit of all future editors.

18 January 1920

The question of human relations, the association of ourselves with ourselves. There has been very little unsentimental research done in this.

To begin with there are two conventions to which we subscribe

i. That all men are all right, (except a class of outsiders we don't deal with. If a friend strays across, or is found there, a lie must be born).
ii. That "all men are liars" [Psalm 116]. Not so common. Between these manifest untruths, an unacknowledged working compromise is arrived at, not talked about. In 'refined' circles it takes the form of accepting facts of the case—& putting a good face on characters we know to be pretty awful. This attitude tempered with another. An acknowledgement of characteristic differences admitting of furious rows tempered again with real toleration. The rows occur, unspeakable things are said & done, & passed over. This, I imagine, is more a working-class attitude. Nowhere is there an attempt to discover the laws of human relationship, adjust them to local & personal needs. Speculate & one is referred to the sacred unit of the family—unity of utter balls.

Now I have observed this—that human beings while they can stand a good deal of group physical association, colleges, armies, cinemas, can stand very little personal physical association (which implies a mental one). This certainty for the cultivated classes—the more intense the life lived, the greater need for privacy.

They granting us emerged from our studies & studios to seek contact. Well, *cor ad cor loquitur* [heart speaks to heart]. For a time. The three stages occur.

Intense contact—sharp disillusion which may kindle an equal dislike, passive tolerance or intolerance. This last the same thing. The cycle may repeat itself—there may be intervals of short-circuiting without disillusion or dislike. But then the person is likely to be a real intimate. The only recipe is solitude & more solitude, & when you have nothing to say, don't say it. The perception of this, however is lost because of the illusions that

what is good today is as good to-morrow—or will appear as good, i.e. that our appetite is insatiable. Or—I like the good. This person is good. So I like this person. I am incapable of feeling the same today for this person. It is inconceivable I should be bad with the good. Therefore this person is bad. Or—this person is good. It is inconceivable that I could be mistaken. It is equally inconceivable that I should be bored with the good, therefore I am still as interested in this person today as I was yesterday. And so on.

Then there is the question of husband & wife who may penetrate, God help them, each other's studies.

There the consequences of short-circuiting seem so devastating that even less admissions would be made.

Now—how much can we stand of each other? What may we fairly expect of one another? The people I have most loved to begin with have been over my own borderland of the admissible. Several have been cads. I whitewashed them till the admission was forced out of me.

Gwen Ingram.

Eleanor.

But Gwen I did not whitewash so much & after five years we meet again after our quarrel with our contact worn down to a stone which I do not think will wear away.[6] Like a low altar between us, a worn stone, not engraved which only we could recognise.

Eleanor on the other hand I have shaken off like a light-filth—the time is not so long but I can't conceive of rejoining her.

As to Hal, I lied most about him, & he was an outsider. But then he had my virginity, & I was a young fool. He is gone, but I could meet him again & be friends. An impudent, triumphant friend.

20 January 1920

It is not properly recognised that nobody can stand too much good will. Nobody, i.e. nobody I've met. People who assume they can can't, they emasculate in a bath of amiability.

There are two loves, love the antithesis of hate, requiring hate to bring out its taste—'Passive' love. Star-moving love—the resolution of the two opposites—identical with life, energy, the sum of repulsion & attraction.

[6] The quarrel resulting from Ingram's sacking had been a serious one. See 1916 note 4.

Now as we all deal in the first kind, our rushing—or tearing apart is natural, as our training together. Yet to "live in charity with all men" [Thomas à Kempis, *De Imitatione Christi*] sounds all right. It should imply persons exempt from time & space (some of us are some of the time) or an agreement.

Everything here comes to that. Since we are not free from the pair of opposites, we have to make an image of that freedom in the world and call it a compromise.

But the English should remember that they cannot be free of the pair of opposites till they know what they are like.

This 'magic in the world' consists of an agreement—often tacitly come upon—to provide outlets from the destroying passions which in the same time will give relief to an amiability now stale.

I allow myself a measure of gossip, & an insolent regard for dress, & certain intellectual stunts as outlets for my reserves of envy, hatred & malice.

John—well, John has a ritual of withdrawal & ignoring.

21 January 1920

To complicate the question of human association comes the erotic relation. This has been elaborated before—women's need & capacity for a finer relation in love than men. I believe this—as a majority absolutely true. Men are such fools at love. Bim [Rodker] drives me frantic & he may be better than most. Over that comes the maternal relation . . . I wonder that any of us are alive to tell it. One sits & blinks in the January sun. Go away & flirt with Wyndham Lewis. Bim will come prowling after. I shall let myself be won back. How often! Do I care a pin for either of them? Or for some idea of love for which they are funnel? Flesh loves flesh. What does the mind love? *Cor ad cor loquitur*. But what is the heart?

If we resent the tyranny of our acquaintance over our emotions, how much more that of our friends, lovers, husbands, children? Women resent children, the pity & love for them that must be there. No escaping the little wretches. At the same time there is that hunger 'to be loved' that is the root of all association. And in our children where there is most compulsory association there should be most love.

There is not. They rush away to cultivate their garden—the solitary job. I want to be alone (one state). I want to be loved (various states).

23 January 1920

One account of a phenomena I stimulate in myself—the 'letting go' when in close & rather cross relation with persons. Myers' *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* [(1903)], the state of unawareness that follows the effort is the just lightest stage of hypnotic trance, when one can still function automatically on the ordinary plane.[7] What jargon. When one has tapped the revealing reconciling agency (once the grace of God) do the other people feel it? You get on better with them, do they get on better with you? Have you liberated it all round? I rather think yes. Certain people may—do—resist.

26 January 1920

It would be interesting to explore why the Wadsworths are detestable.[8] On my soul I don't know—when they talk bawdy—they do it very well. I dislike it—& her laugh is loathsome—a squawking explosion. Aristocrats & 'low lots' are all right—these two are the cream of the middle-classes. Middle classes nefas [unlawful deed] (my mother came from them—but she would never laugh like that).

Allow for their lack of breeding, & John's attraction to Mrs Wadsworth. I can't put it down to a case of plain repressed jealousy. Allow for a little that is. Perhaps it is because they represent to me John's triviality—I mean in speech. I love noble words & the beau geste. I crave them. I hear nothing from him, month in month out, but echolalic music hall rubbish, & a little clumsy tenderness, & teasing, teasing.[9] I'm raw with it. There's no fun left in me. I'd sooner he never spoke to me again. I'd die for something real, something to bite on to. I'm half dead for the want of it.

This in connection with those people is far fetched. The woman I met four times. In Fitzroy St—I disliked her. At her evening party—I was most unhappy. At the Walenskys' [unidentified]—she gave me a spasm of

[7] Frederic Myers (1843–1901), philosopher and one of the presidents of the Society for Psychical Research founded in 1882 to examine allegedly paranormal phenomena in a scientific and unbiased way. Other presidents included the French philosopher Henri Bergson, the British Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, and the Australian classicist Gilbert Murray.

[8] Edward Wadsworth (1889–1949) British artist, one of the commissioned War Artists. Wadsworth designed a striking colophon for the Ovid Press. His wife Fanny Wadsworth was a violinist.

[9] Echolalia: pathological echoing of what is said by other people, usually a sign of mental disorder.

discomfort in a glorious evening. When I dined there, I kept my thumbs in my hands & it took copious whiskey to bring me round. When they dined here, it left me half dead.

Now I don't think it's them. It may be the woman—it's something they evoke. I rather like him. She is tolerable. Both are serious & accomplished artists.

1 February 1920

Sally does not care—here you can watch a woman living already half in another world. Such another world—without question like the colour of her amazing eyes. A grey crystal.

4 February 1920

Is it going to be the same with John & when Wyndham Lewis does not paint my portrait? When John goes there will be a wrench & a scream & calm.

If tonight he had not wanted to go to the pictures, or drink beer at the Monico, or tea at the Armenian?[10] If he had wanted to stay here, & play with me, & revive me after flu, & chase off the grey devils?

6 February 1920

Outcome with Maitland magic. The signatures. That he knew Eleanor.

That he had picked me (might be too apt—part of my 'recognition' was assumed.) The conversation about the Abyss. ([Aubrey] Beardsley & the "pathos of wickedness") I seem to recognise the opening lines of my old role of comforter, illuminator, possible sexual producer of this young man. It is repeating itself, but may be more interesting—or even less futile—with him, because we can externalise our emotion through a partnership in magic.

I handed on my 'receipt' for primary initiation. This is the second person.

[10] The British painter Dora Carrington described Rodker as "the Armenian." *Carrington: Letters and Extracts from Her Diaries,* ed. David Garnett (Oxford University Press, 1979), 49. For information about the Monico in Shaftesbury Ave. and the café nicknamed "The Armenian," see Douglas Goldring, *The Nineteen Twenties: A General Survey and Some Personal Memories* (London: Nicolson & Watson, 1945), 155–6 and Nina Hamnett, *Laughing Torso* (London: Virago, 1984), 88.

The image of the scourged body, always a sexual one with me is the external for my imagination's ritual for the comfort of the soul, the "healing of the nations" [Revelations, 22].

To return to the meaning of the Abyss.[11] The other side of the phenomena, the vortex, is the abyss or the nothing. This 'nothing' seems to have inhabitants which are a 'something.' It does not seem to be synonymous with antithetic ideas of good & evil.

It has signatures in the external world. Beardsley's drawings. Possibly some of Goya's. In Eleanor's orison of malice. Maitland has looked into it. Not Wyndham Lewis though one might think. The vast mind has looked.

Odin—"I knew that I hung" etc.

It has something to do with the negation of man's will. When I have my terrible fits with John it is because I look through him into the abyss.

'Elementals' of our common mystery mongering.

Nasty story of Arthur Machen ["The Children of the Pool"?].[12]

Jimmy [Rodker] may be one of the people of the abyss!

Flu.

15 February 1920

[Underhill's] *Column of Dust* [(1909)]. Left me shaking off disgusts.[13] Now why? Why I have the terrible fits is because John won't let me love him as I want to—or I have not understood how to love him. John is a faun. It is difficult to love fauns—much more to make fauns love you.

I found out to-day that Maitland & I ought to have met when the Eleanor business was at its worst. It seems also that we tried to meet. As

[11] The word "abyss" may well have had other, more worldly, connotations for Butts. At the end of the nineteenth century "abyss" was the name given to London's poverty-stricken East End, where Rodker grew up. See Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Vintage, 2001), 678. "Abyss" was also often associated with the Great War, as in a letter by Henry James who referred to the "plunge of civilisation into this abyss of blood and darkness." *The Letters of Henry James.* Vol. II, ed. Percy Lubbock (London: Macmillan, 1920), 398.

[12] Arthur Machen (1863–1947), British writer interested in the Grail and spiritualism.

[13] Evelyn Underhill (1875–1941), poet, novelist, and authority on mysticism. *Column of Dust* was dedicated to Machen, although he did not like it. See Machen to Colin Summerford, 12 May 1924, *Arthur Machen Selected Letters: The Private Writings of the Master of the Macabre,* ed. Roger Dobson, Godfrey Brangham, and R. A. Gilbert (Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1988), 93.

he said: "Something went wrong." He could have saved me that & developed an adventure. What went wrong? It shows that the circles can be broken. It makes me cry it's so futile & sad.

16 February 1920

I'm so lonely. It's no use trying to tell John anything.

He contradicts, not only your interpretation, but the facts. It is driving me mad. Bad words "oh, I don't see" & he never unsays them. They grind on in my mind. They rise & open up old wounds. Never once has he understood a single thing that I have felt. I want to tell him so. The wise want love. It is like Eleanor—the denigration. If I could have satisfaction. It never comes, & life drags from disappointment to disappointment. All the lovely cheer has gone away. I can't get it back. Jimmy [Rodker] can't love any one. Never once in his life has he had sympathy with another, & he doesn't pretend, he contradicts the raw mind on its facts.

I need him so. I want to die. I'm mad. Like loving an Ellman.

I never said it wasn't there when it was torturing.

19 February 1920

This explosion led to a very bad night. It was the culmination of the winter madness. We got it out—faults—perhaps his sheer masculinity—his 'cruelty' really—his self-sufficiency. My want of self-reliance, my seeking reassurance. Also we both want a holiday from each other—No chance of that.

25 February 1920

Have practised automatic writing, were scrawls, but so far as I can judge, automatic.

Very tired, convinced that delayed curse is not pregnancy. There are stages of fatigue when one has enormous comfort in the use of a deep chair, a fire, cigarette, match, an hour vacant. One assembles these, lies back asks nothing more—a security most delightful because it is, a shifting-dissolving point in the infinite insecurity. [Wyndham] Lewis permits an interest in 'behind phenomena,' also [Vassily] Kandinsky. Both painters & writers.

But what feeble "subliminal uprush" (Jung) the scrawls without form make with increasing facility, & the deep recognitions of apparently un-

related phenomena which rise also automatically, & are among the first formula of creation.

28 February 1920

To-day there came back as I slept & alternately listened to the birds in the spring rain, an intuition of the creating way, I have forgotten. Not the early innocence, not the despair, the negation of the will, the unreasonable, disproportionate idea, the slavery that shrieks & sneers, but a fusion of the energy of the one with the wisdom of the other. A third power. I don't suppose I shall command it, but it would dissolve & resolve into manageable proportions everything even the baby, even John's alien strangeness, his depth & his slightness.

The danger of 'magic' & its enquiry is that it may diminish, 'despiritualise' the 'material' world. "Hunting, industry, whaling, war" [Emerson, "Self-Reliance,"] art, love, scholarship, dancing, tobacco, we will throw away our tools, & concentrate on this direct enquiry.[14] Nothing will take away from me the sense of the terrific and absolute importance of phenomena.

This persian chess table . . .

29 February 1920

Sick of magical enquiry.

Probably pregnant.

Go on with Essay:[15]

The War is not to be considered in this case as a producer of literature except in the sense of moeurs contemporains. The significant literature produced by the War—having any quality of permanency—will appear in ten or more years' time.

The War influence is negative, hinders, deflects, stops, does not create: Consider its influence in a negative way. Might begin with the bright side-lights the moeurs contemporains (& the collapse of the Georgian writers of such) then the permanent stuff.

[14] The actual quotation is "commerce, husbandry, hunting, whaling, war . . ." Butts's quotation from Emerson's essay "Self-Reliance" may have been prompted by mention of her own "want of self-reliance" a few days earlier. See 19 February 1920.

[15] Essay Butts probably sent to *The Athenaeum.* It has not been traced.

5 March 1920

Margaret Schleselmann came unexpectedly.[16] She was horrible, who was once the brightest object. Shall I turn into that sort of thing? Maitland said "No you won't because you'll never grow up." A sentimentality, but what I mean is that I have life out of myself. She only drew it in. She died to rear her babies. Is that necessary? I will not let it be so.

Pregnancy is nausea, & a tight leaden stomach.

Last night I tried to face a nightmare. Partial success.

Enormous interest—I shall induce another & try again.

12 March 1920

I want bread & they offer me a stone [reference to Matthew 7, 9].[17] This child is a stone.

My book is bread. I don't want to have it. Yet, when it comes to going to Leicester Square & buying a pill I am paralysed.

No money to pay bills. Let alone to have a baby.

A prey for the life-impulse.

I am just getting old enough not to expect Jimmy [Rodker] to understand.

It should be a matter of indifference whether I bear or am barren. So long as the spirit is not barren. And if the spirit should be barren—

[Reading] Rose Macaulay *Non-Combatants* [(1916)].

22 March 1920

Marie Bashkirtseff has wound me up to begin this [journal] again.[18] So little has happened & so much. I shriek out for life as loud as she. The bitterness of this 29th year & the utter failure of my work. The cursed child grows. I am slow with the pain of my failure & quick with the pain of it.

[16] G. Margaret Boyd Schleselmann (b. 1890), attended Westfield between 1908–11. Worked as a senior mistress at St. Michael's School Ealing. The dedicatee and subject of a number of Butts's early unpublished poems written at Westfield and the inspiration for the character Margaret Clomarion Chester in "Dangerous" ("Unborn Gods.") Although Butts calls her Schleselmann, from the fact that she is a mother, she may well already be married and called Margaret Holloway by 1920.

[17] A central motif in Butts's poem "A Pythian Ode" (1924).

[18] Marie Bashkirtseff (1858–1884): Russian emigré who came to Paris as a child. Feminist painter and diarist, she died of tuberculosis at twenty-six. A number of her written works were published posthumously, including her *Journal* (1887).

Often I am tranquil & humorous, tender & gentle, fond of plain food & sugar & salt, hating tobacco. Am I less intrigued by the bizarre—Sologub's *Little Demon* [trans. Cournos & Aldington (1916)] disappointed me on re-reading.[19] Its matter was more familiar from meditation & experience, its manner seemed therefore less brilliant.

I could write, but I won't.

The world must do without me unless it will listen more.

The last two months nothing has gone well. Is fun up & I sink a dragging flight. Last night objects became intensely firm & solid, more there than they are—John's mouth—carved wooden negro-lips. Acorns to the soft flesh.

29 March 1920

Sick, neuralgic, worn out. This is ill-health. Two months of it. I must try & work Roger for what I can. Oh for a rich protector—or a conversion to Buddhism! But the latter is not a complete deliverence.

Maitland & I are in love with the 4th dimension.[20]

Tonight I had almost broken through, I wondered why the thought did not come.

We promised to communicate further on the subject, even when he would be in Persia. I did not quite know what to think, then I thought not of a state but of an act.

I made him fetch a corn razor, & slashed a cross on his wrist & on mine. 3 slashes to each in my eagerness to draw blood. We sucked each other's cuts & kissed them, & lay back licking our own wrists.

Now with that—no more ritual than I have said, laughter masking eagerness—something clicked—something that was not arbitrary, 'not of the will of flesh.' I felt certain of the reality of our association.

Literature of the 4th Dimension
[Hogg,] *Kilmeny*
[George MacDonald,] *At the Back of the North Wind*

[19] Fyodor Sologub (1863–1927), Russian schoolteacher and writer. *The Little Demon* published first as a novel (1907) and then as a play (1909). Set in a provincial Russian town, the ambitious teacher Peredonov, unable to fight against everyday frustrations, is gradually driven into violent paranoia (he sees the demon everywhere) and incites a riot in the town. Influenced by Dostoevsky and Gogol, Sologub's work has been compared to Huysmans's.

[20] For the fourth dimension, see Glossary.

[Walter de la Mare,] "The Listeners"
[Donne,] "Go and Catch a falling star"
Anywhere in Dostoevsky
[Yeats,] *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*

31 March 20

How idle I am. What a business is this motherhood which keeps me like a lizard, not of convalescence but of incipient breakdown—crawling out into the Sun.

My psychic life is deep & active, my roots run down, & wave expanding in dark pools, a surface life hardly exists or a life of the intellect or of the will.

A large foul lively beast that Herbert [Jonathan] Cape.[21] I don't wonder that his wife died off so quietly, only how she died, & with what information.

My mind has been relieved by an explanation of my deep unhappiness. Long ago John said that my relative want of belief in myself was a mark of femininity. How angry it made me, but I saw its truth. How slowly I have begun to recognise there is in me—I have—a unique perception, a unique gift. It is at present badly developed, quite unrecognised, threatened with extinction & a torture not a deliverance.

But that's at the bottom of me. I love the people who help deliver it—I mistrust Jimmy because he does not recognise it.

Because I am nearly thirty & relatively a failure, & the objective side of that failure has been largely the fault of my diffidence, craving vanity & bitterness have lately appeared. A good contempt & scepticism too & a perception. The great power leaps in me & they offer me a child!

Have I developed this opinion to free myself from a charge of feminine dependence? Not that I can perceive.

2 April 1920

Lately I have dreamed of Cecil [Maitland] (he is sitting beside me) as my lover—each time, with less & less inhibitions. To-day I want it while he is here. Some time ago when he wasn't, earlier only in sleep.

Only it is better in sleep than it would be. Fantastic—but of a quality.

Wiser to leave it at that!

[21] The publisher Jonathan Cape (1879–1960) may well have rejected "Dangerous" ("Unborn Gods") or *Ashe of Rings.* His wife Edith died in 1919.

6 April 1920

The signatures rise. To-day [schoolfriend] Ida Binks wrote to me, after all these years. "We belong, I know to different states of life." That pleased me. It is all incorporated in the 'white patch' into which I am passing with her thanks for teaching her to read poetry, "the best thing I ever learned."[22] I can answer that letter, meet her again & keep my sanctity.

For knowledge that something will come out of *Ashe*'s visit to Middleton Murry. Will that be delusion? Eppur si muove.[23] In the *Athenaeum* Essay I noted the connection between Dostoevsky & Yeats. What will Middleton Murry make of that?[24]

I want to write about something in the other world I've just forgotten.

I need not have feared to lose with my taste for tobacco, my taste for the bizarre. [Kramer and Sprenger's] *Malleus Maleficarum* in the British Museum.[25]

9 April 1920

Read Venitiana's *The Great Grimoire*.[26] It is no use enquiring into receipts which begin "take a young virgin wolf."[27] I don't know verveine when I see it. Lie back in your chair & let the Reading Room dome pour over your head, you will get an extraordinary sensation—[28]

[22] This letter may well have prompted Butts to write "Angele au Couvent," her story begun shortly afterwards about a schoolgirl who inspires her friend at a Fifeshire girls' boarding school. This story, published in Butts's first collection, *Speed the Plough and other stories* (1923) received particularly high praise from the writers Rose Macaulay, Bryher, and Conal O'Riordan. See Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 126–7.

[23] Galileo is purported to have said this ("And yet it moves") under his breath after his recantation during his trial in 1633 for supporting the heliocentric system.

[24] This may well be part of the same essay she submitted to *The Athenaeum.* See note 15.

[25] Rodker later republishes this text. See 28 January 1928. In 1930 he republishes Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), which Butts, reading it in 1920, finds "picturesque, but with a good writer's elegance."

[26] A book of magic, *The Great Grimoire* is supposedly by an Antonio Venitiana del Rabina, probably written in the eighteenth century.

[27] Butts is probably reading A. E. Waite's translation of the diabolical book of spells in his *Book of Black Magic and Pacts* (1898). The passage she quotes actually refers to a young virgin *kid* rather than a wolf. Butts reads Waite's own work in 1925.

[28] In Butts's lifetime and up until 1999 the British Library's Reading Room was housed in the British Museum. Butts writes a paean to this building in 1914 (see Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 76) and it features in several of her narratives including "Dangerous," "In Bloomsbury," and "Deosil/Widdershins."

> I think that all religious men have believed that there is a hand not ours in the events of life, & that, as someone says in Wilhelm Meister, accident is destiny; & I think it was Heracleitus who said: the Daemon is our destiny. When I think of life as a struggle with the Daemon who would ever set us to the hardest work among those not impossible, I understand why there is a deep emnity between a man & his destiny, & why a man loves nothing but his destiny . . . (Doom-eager) . . . I am persuaded that the Daemon delivers & deceives us, & that he wove that netting from the stars & threw the net from his shoulder. Then my imagination runs from daemon to sweetheart & I divine an analogy that evades the intellect.
>
> [Yeats] *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* [(1918)]

12 April 1920

Again the difficulty of writing down the most vivid experiences. They fade, & remain just below the surface. This pregnancy appears to be good for clairvoyance.

The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage arrived. Some day I shall be an adept. I have not written down the significant thing—it is waiting under the edge of my mind. Finished essay for *Athenaeum*—gifted women writing on secondary phenomena.[29]

13 April 1920

The first difficulty is that we will insist upon trying one expression, one state, or elaboration of dimension, in terms of another, or of one ~~simplification~~, less elaborate. The only way that I have found by which it is possible in any way to be sensible of their elision is by that quiet & emptying of the top tray of the mind by a formula, & waiting that which rises—either as a bubble of perception, through gradation, into a perception at once turned into action—as when last night I could make Jimmy [Rodker] make love to me in the way I like & made a success of the night. It cannot be done any other way that I know (without the use of drugs). So

[29] Butts was a runner-up for the *Athenaeum* Essay Competition and won £3. See "'Athenaeum' Prize Competition," *The Athenaeum,* 4703 (18 June 1920), 801. It may well have been for this essay. It was not printed in this issue and has not been located.

hard is that world to approach that I could only write down this statement of perception after an interval of quiet.

Bibliography of x-dimensional world (continued ii)
Verses from the [anonymous] ballad of "Thomas the Rhymer"
[George Meredith,] "The Shaving of Shagpat"
Euripides, *Bacchae*
The Orphic Tablet
A number of Ballads

15 April 1920

Like everything else it 'becomes' in gradations, from not happening to happening. Tried the opposite mirrors flanked by two candles. Landscape—sea & a steamer with a spreading plume of smoke—result. An infantile preoccupation. The truth is that first-hand physical perception (I mean with the senses) needs cultivation in me. I want to rationalise, believe & disbelieve, have a pleasure in finding out a deception. That is why I work in so well with Maitland. It's my ideas of race & reason & the creative spirit in man. He doesn't care a button, thrusts in his perception like a woman, & gets there. He discovered to me today an idiosyncracy I had long shunned—that on certain subjects, or attitudes expressed to subjects—a word contrary to my own conviction will serve to turn my warm liking, my respect, my love into complete indifference & contempt. Tony for instance. There have been people at school—at college. Everywhere. A phrase & opinion—either I'm off for good like a wood-cock, or my whole opinion of them is changed. A little worm of contempt, or indignation. They are not forgiven. I must find out what the points are—

16 April 1920

Mountains, mountains, we're going away, fall south through Europe.[30]

[30] Butts is referring to her imminent trip with Rodker to the Pyrenees—see June 1920. John Rodker writes: "going to France for 2 or 3 months' holiday. I've been sweating very hard at the press, doing all the printing myself." Rodker to Wallace Stevens, May 1920, in Laurence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 46. Contrary to Rodker's claim see reference to comment by Dorothy Richardson in note 2. Butts herself later remarked on her "hands-on" involvement in the press: "when I was married to John Rodker, & we did hand-printing in the basement very badly." Butts to Wescott, 8 August 1923, Wescott papers.

19 April 1920

This is a great magical truth, an explanation of the 'quod superius.'[31] The Larve [Rodker] is right, all actions are "indifferent & events." What is significant is the attitude of the mind.

Read *The Magical Ritual* [by] Westcott.

21 April 1920

These weeks I have been hindered wanting a formula. These books an occultism with their bastard words, credulities, falsities on facts, emotion & aesthetic falsities, inwardly revolt me. The symbols save when they were purely numeral & abstract, seemed but poor correspondences. Then I came back on a sudden turn. I remembered [Harrison's] *Prolegomena* & the others, the profoundest study of my adolescence—mystery cults from Thrace to Eleusis. I remembered the *Bacchae*. There are my formulae, there my words of power. "O God, Beast, Mystery, Come" [Euripides, *Bacchae*]. I am rereading the *Prolegomena*—it reels off before me in plain script (all the more because it was written, by a woman, with no magical thesis to prove). There I know I shall find the way. Demeter Anesidora & Dionysos of the Flower, Bromios, Sabazios, Master of the Voices of the Night, Thyad, Lyssiad—Dithyrambos. "Change not the barbarous names of evocation."[32] But here is the Hellenic grace. A vast tranquillity & assurance have come out of this.

25 April 1920

'God,' Dionysos, x-dimensional world the high explosive. Cf. what Euripides did not see at the end of the *Bacchae*, that the god who blasted Semele & the god who made a mother tear in pieces her son are the same force, acting so because 'they' must. A simple point—perhaps Euripides did see, & implied it in the lost passage. Might this have something to do with the arcanum nonsense? Maitland's idea is that it is to be found in the realisation of the identity of good & evil which once 'caught on' with average sensual man would have startling results. Dostoevsky & the Prince in *Crime and Punishment*.

[31] See 10 December 1919.

[32] This quotation continues: "for there are sacred Names in every language which we are given by God, having in the Sacred Rites a Power Ineffable." *The Chaldaean Oracles of Zoroaster* [epigrams], trans. Sapere Aude (pseudonym of Westcott) (1895).

27 April 1920

When the worst of temporal disasters has happened one finds in it a 'spiritual' quality sufficient to preoccupy.[33] Now nothing matters—Maitland's declaration, my half acquiesence, sport, exuberance beside this.

30 April 1920

I have re-read [Dostoevsky's] *The Possessed*. It was worth a stiff knee to compel one. One has undergone again the most awful illumination the mind, no the soul, can undergo. Only as a western European I have a protest. I can't tell how far it is superficial. Take the fact of human life without its scientific-historical perspective, & the contemplation of pain, the 'metaphysical obscenity' become what they are to Stavrogin & his creator [Dostoevsky]. The western European answer is "accept life by realising the hybrid 'animal-anima' you are." We imagine a gradual assertion of the will over every conceivable manifestation of life. We add some variety of immortality to 'make it up' for ancestors & contemporaries. We say 'patience, knowledge, work.' Russians don't like this. At the end of *Peter and Alexis* [trans. (1905)] Merezhkovsky leaves his young Russian dumb on a moor in the sun with nothing but a vision Merezhkovsky at least is inadequate to communicate.[34] He had before hesitated whether to go south into Europe & learn, & had decided against it. The vision & the loss of speech were his choice. Suppose the European is half right, suppose man can be surpassed by hard work & taking thought. It leaves the attendant pain, the past miseries & injustice where they were. Only to live it over again & live it over right. So the Russian is right after all. Whatever the future, there's no forgiving the past. So why worry with Europe's preoccupations? The Russian also wants man surpassed, instantly, by a miracle. (Yet Aloisha is Dostoevsky's one lie.) We'd have it happen respectably, socially. His people seem, as [Wyndham] Lewis says, a little heavy souled.

Yet the conclusion of the matter is so vital that nothing so important may be said with probability to have been imminent before—that a new man is being born, or rather that a special kind of man is being recognised & developed—the man who not only looks into but lives in the timeless

[33] Fitz Taylor withdraws her offer of money which would have "meant health and leisure and ease," Butts, 27 April 1920. It may have been in part for the Press but this is not made clear.

[34] Dmitri Merezhkovsky (1865–1941), Russian novelist.

world. Such have been from the beginning. Perhaps it took western science to fix them, to explain, to correct intuition by the fact. Aloisha [in *The Brothers Karamazov*] is a lie because he is only there morally. (As Cecil said, people may well fear a moral danger when the great arcanum is revealed.) To get rid of the preoccupation with 3 dimensional time & space will be the first step—only the first step. Everything else will go in its turn. Into the pure light . . . ? Well we all of us have to reckon on the Abyss. In the last chapters of *The Possessed* the unprepared, uninitiated men the abyss comes through—like tall spearheads & bulrushes, & the little men go mad & whirl about them, in & out, & are broken up.

It's like a hideous ___ there is no similitude for the ingathering of the obscenities, it is like the abyss. The Abyss does not need ghastly accompaniments, rape, cruel deaths to manifest itself. An arrangement of anything is enough for the 'metaphysical obscenity' to come through. (One might work out arrangements.) In *Ashe*, I could not get that through. I tried with Judy's face in the glass for an image. It is all how it is looked at. Even Cecil who hangs over the abyss didn't see her as I saw her. The Larve in the flesh [Rodker] couldn't see it. I saw. I shall never be free from the haunting. I look at my stomach swelling with the child & it seems like a white dead turbot 'of considerable dimensions.' That is 'beastly' to my romantic pride, but it's not the abyss. A reflection of my feeling, a kind of despair has at an angle, something to do with it.

In Diary-keeping one may fall over into the over-cynical. I have no courage of my nobilities.

2 May 1920

The Larve is calling me back with a reminder to take Middleton Murry with a pinch of salt. This liberal transcendentalism is my besetting weakness. I lap my tongue in it, & at twenty-nine the debauch of tender nobility has only begun to make me sick. What a corrective is the Larve!

Everywhere in this business of the unseen I sense a design, part arbitrary, part significant, over which I tumble as over a carving whose design is to be judged in the dark. Bring a candle & all is simply evident.

Pregnancy affects me with a craving need to lead what I imagine to have been 'the old life.' That means I think a life when (by paying) one secured automatic comfort. 'Servants.' Quick transit from one scene to the other & from one affair. Oh the fatigue that comes from hanging about for a bus! From quick transit to high speed—to sit by the driver of a power-

ful car & fly off over the skin of the earth. A quick bus sends me into ecstacy.

What I used to like I now crave for with all my body. When I was asleep I saw the sea like a blue steel mirror & I skimming it in a boat. The light poured on & off.

Some nights ago I was alone looking out into the garden at the full moon & the high spring night. I felt the balcony a great low window like the stern of a ship, & the wind on the leaves sufficient intimation of the sea. Last summer I felt it & wrote *Ashe* to our invisible passage. Again I felt it so strong, & all my knowledge of the sea came back. I was at the helm of the ship I could feel & partly see. It occurred to me that my life even now was a 'majestic thing.' I am with child, great powers in my mind & perception are gathering. (I know all about marriage now—that men marry, as Ethel [Colburn Mayne] says—to be rid of the exalted side of passion. I adored Cecil when he said that if we were married he would be the same & when he seemed to understand something of the agony women suffer.) Once the child is born & weaned, I shall have run the gauntlet of marriage—no more of it, lovers & solitude for the rest of my life!

7 May 1920

Suppose I were to die this autumn without one last fling for my body. I'm satiated with the thought of his [Cecil's] embraces. I want to lie with him in that room & leave there a patch of ivory & gold—whichever we do, we shall regret, but we would have the lovely certainty of that embrace. I feel 'too much the mother,' too much . . . the miserable furious earth [ref. to *King Lear*]. (When I am dead, & someone edits these—how many phrases will be picked out to illustrate my bad taste?) Just to use my body once more before its beauty goes—perhaps for ever. And I shall have broken a taboo. One's body says such plain common-sense. Love shall adorn you. I want to move about in that other blessed world where the light is a sparkling flood counting time in its pulse & the mind is the creator.

There are two kinds of reading—reading which is contemplation—even a kind of vision & reading for information. For the first only the best will do, for the rest—then one can let in anything one would like to read in the world.

Butts and Rodker travel via Paris to St Bertrand de Comminges, a small Cathedral village in the Pyrenees near Toulouse, where they stay until July

1920. This village (also visited by Edith Wharton and Henry James in 1906) was the setting for "Canon Alberic's Scrapbook" (1894–5) by the British ghost story writer M. R. James. While Butts does not know of his work at this time, James will later have a considerable influence on her writing.

19 May 1920 Paris

At least I have what he [Cecil] said that he has—such peace & happiness in love as he has never had before. It is all in me—the exaltation & sweetness of that last day & his letter. Here to my horror it begins to appear as intrigue. It is intrigue, here & now. But we have lived three-quarters of it in that other world where are the pure forms.

[June 1920] [St Bertrand de Comminges]

A way of judging phenomena—here a cliché till a better phrase appears—three-dimensionally or four-dimensionally. I know 'for a fact' about that fourth world, & how it mixes with our third estate, begin to see how to adjust one with the other, how one act impure in one is pure in the other, one instance is obvious & vice versa (Good & Evil as we understand them seem to belong only to the third estate). Cf. passage about the "state of fire" in [Yeats'] *Per Amica*.

Then I who hungered for physical marvels met Cecil with his unspeakable knowledge, & found that I who couldn't 'envoûter [bewitch] a kitten' or raise a mouse could let in at least the first heaven. Not one of the magical acts of the grimoire, but I knew about the abyss & the counter abyss & the union of the pairs of opposites. I can't hem a handkerchief neatly, but I can write.

The life I lead here in these mountains, lame, weather-bound, is one of such intense inner concentration on Cecil & on what is behind Cecil, that I feel as though I were preparing in great ignorance an enormous event.

14 June 1920

I went out this evening on the hills & had to make my formula 'let it go.' I never needed it more. A little later 'my eyes were opened' to specific lovely sights my miserable concentration had barred. Short turf at the

edge of the rocks. A swallow that flew straight at me like a blue & red bee (so foreshortened). Caterpillars. The bird with the red back, dove front, black patch on sides of head, dark tail, very slender. Knew it & couldn't name it.

16 June 1920

Yesterday as I sat by the mountain river & looked up at that hill streaming with sun, & felt myself so heavy with child that I could scarcely walk the two miles home. I understood how women, with child-bearing always in their mind, had at whatever cost, to tame their men, by fraud, force, cajolery, anyway, anyhow to protect them, feed & provide for them while they were with young. The instinct explains so much of the worst things we do.

20 June 1920

One could liken our nature to a well with a little conscious soul sitting on the edge & looking at the circumference. It sees the stones, the parapet, the water with itself looking in. If it looks deep & takes trouble it sees the water rising & the odd things at the sides & even the bottom of the well. Then it thinks it has mapped out its being. But at the bottom of the well there is a spring & where that water comes from is so little known it is hardly a matter for speculation. But there is an art of letting down one's bucket—past the shallow scoop that catches the scum, down into the dark water, & occasionally drawing up water from the unknown pipes to the centre of the earth. But the point of fusion is not known. One thinks one recognises it by a greater or less mingling of originality.

23 June 1920

I can't command either perceptions, 'magical' states or dreams. I have to wait the moment. I can induce nothing—I can't recall or repeat—I doubt the habit of inducing by drink or drugs. In the matter of concentration, I can tap the subconscious by the ritual of 'letting go,' & I can detach myself for sleep or even light trance. But I don't seem able to keep quiet enough to induce light enough trance—without sleep—to let the images rise. When I don't try, I do! as Yeats describes in *Per Amica*. Less can I think of an object—even a person beloved—without my mind straying before anything comes of it—or if my eyes are shut, without feeling sleepy. I just course on with associated images.

24 June 1920

Tried Yeats' suggestion, scented leaves on pillow. Never slept sounder. The worrying about bills which will be paid in two months analysed—simply the projection of my fears of the world's revenge on my broken taboos. I've broken most as it suited me—without at the time much strain. Over this point of credit I'm rather objectively vulnerable—supposed forgotten years have poured into it as with a mould.

29 June 1920

Behind each sorrow is fear. Behind our sins, behind our anxieties, behind our loves & revenges. The one universal God. To some people an awful objective God. They must never see anything else—most of my life I never see anything else. There is everything to fear. Look behind every hope & there is fear many times as high. The miser that will follow our raptures, in & out, in & out, but the miser will have the last word. Don't doubt, we are in for an eternity of it. There is only the rough world, but if we lived in that & knew it, I don't doubt but we should find fear also. All our life is spent dodging fear & braving it. Now & then one says 'the worst will happen' & one waits. When it is over one is greyer & tireder—& they talk of the gospel of cheerfulness & the cure by the wind. They're all right. They help one to live. But nothing will make one forget the truth of what one has seen. And what we've seen is bad enough to create the great image of Fear—while the good we have seen—temporary Gods & charities, will pass. But fear doesn't pass. It was with the stone age man & it's here with us. The God that doesn't die, or need to re-incarnate. His burden is extraordinarily heavy—we throw it off—but it creeps up our backs again. Perfect love—so it does for a bit, but fear comes back & dries it up. We are like the flies on the paper squirming away, casting out our eggs in a white stream behind us—all our taboos & our joys—to get rid of fear, & we stay squirming fast glued down as ever—a little nearer our death. I am afraid. The only thing left is to try & understand.

5 July 1920

I can now trace the hell that fear made for me. I told John how nearly 'physical' my relations with Cecil had been. There was very little need, only I knew that he did not know. And I was afraid—a vague fear of broken taboos a 'confession' would make all right. What happened was that I loosed two things in John—his just grievances against various things in

my behaviour—often long ago—things by which he had lost Face—things I had done in the reaction of disappointment. Cecil was the clef to these unspoken discontents. But these grievances did not come out by way of jealous or wounded love (I do not believe that he felt that).‡ It was very curious to see a person injured in a way the whole world considers legitimate make so little of the injury in the world's legitimate way. What came through was an enormous cold disgust & contempt of life—& hence of me as its exponent. My torture was double—like a child 'I did not want the Larve to be like that'—anything but that, angry, wounded, divinely generous, but not cruel, cold & indecent. Again, my six weeks crystal sphere, or my snail-shell was broken. The plan conceived in the fourth world had been to love them both, & in the satisfaction Cecil gave to parts of my nature leave patience to wait on the Larve's good time. A plan to eat my cake & have it perhaps, but granted certain conditions possible, lovely, wise & good. He dragged it out & stripped it, dramatised himself as the mari complaisant & me as some kind of sentimental bitch without dignity, or quality in love. And in this world he is right. What a male oriental spike of egoism he is, & next day with his clumsy efforts to retrieve—what an adorable child. Am I a wife or a stone, or a desirable tart? I am too nearly a mother to take interest in either of their persons. All my horror of the world & the people in it has come back. This is what they make of the starry heavens. (I have forgotten what they are like myself, my weariness of Cecil seems likely to equal my weariness of the Larve.) I had come to love him again with a love partly a wife's, partly a child's. I have to pick up the burden of exactly what he is—a thing I have misunderstood or funked before. To-day came a marvellous letter from Cecil which threw a faint image of his image before me. It was curious how that love failed me—sank into my subconsciousness & would not come out. There the love that love had re-evoked went too—I was left in a most horrible state. Without money what niche have I in this world—with such a man as John what sort of future? I can live neither in this world or the other. I have forgotten the one truth for this world in the Athenian "Nothing too much." For this last week I've been a houseless snail too raw to face any kind of living—I got ill. The Larve was worried, offering a three-dimensional comfort to a woman dying for the world

‡*John Rodker:* This is wrong. You broke my heart when you told me! It came out that way because I wanted to humiliate you. They came out as injured pride, not a pride nobly expressed.[35]

[35] In 1921 Rodker steals this volume of Butts's diary, writing comments in the margins. These appear marginally here as well and are noted as such.

where we were three spearheads in a stream of water that was like light. I became weak, there were times when I could hardly walk. It was maddening & pitiful to see him trying to find comfort for me, & it came out coarse. I found myself completely impatient as I need to be. I remember that long dreadful night crying & my re-iterated cry "you will go away now vilely pleased when I was learning to let you go, to help you to go in peace." I thought to myself "you have taken everything from me, & given me nothing & this misery is what your egoism 'permits.'" At the same time I loved him with awful desolating craving, & despised & pitied him & myself, & when he came over to me, I threw it all out & held him in my arms & told him the money he could have to go away. Now we are friends again round a dead core of tiredness, but it's all gone, the exquisite reborn thing. I could be tolerant, a little bitter, & deceive him tranquilly. And he can go—I see that it must come to that, go & no marriage left, not go away to work with the essentials left—like a row of canopic jars.‡ He is not the man I thought him. What sort of a man was that? He is several men—I'm frightened of being hurt by him again. It all seemed to depend on Cecil's answers to the description I was brave enough to give him. The first letter, before the catastrophe—is divine. I dread the days he will spend before my reassurance comes. The Larve was so good to me tonight, we are three poor children! And I'm a fool not to have left well alone.

‡*John Rodker:* But I will not be an eternal husband. I want love too—Passion what you gave me at the beginning.

7 July 1920

There is nothing more to add except that I get heavier every day. I can pass hours in sleep & meditation & most thorough hatred of the world. If my back would stop aching, I could get through it.

8 July 1920

In the question of magic one is always, I think, deceived when one expects an immediate result.

I can see my love rising as if out of a well. God grant it will not be a corpse when I pull it out. But I have till Christmas—I want to love him all the time, but I can only love swans. My geese have to be swans at the time & when I find them out.‡ I leave them & it's the fault of neither & of both. Oh let Cecil be a real swan this time, or if he is not let his goosishness tire very quickly of me.

‡*John Rodker:* You had a unicorn in your menagerie but you have sent it away.

This after the letter I had to-day! But well-bred generosity doesn't make a swan. The child predisposes me to fret. "Sink in the stream, old fish." If we keep, as we may well, the power to enter, explore, enjoy, try to understand the fourth world together—all will be well with us, & I think with Bim [Rodker]. To do that without utter disaster one must remember in this world the one rule of nothing too much. Maybe the two worlds between them will grind us out. Cecil accepts that—I protest a little.

9 July 1920

A little of my fun came back, but this evening I'm worn out. There is a dreadful sterility in living alone with him without friends, without anything to break our au fond [deep down] unsuitability. No blame attaches. But I feel degraded by his perpetual indifference to everything that warms & stimulates me. His is an active sneer—last night there was another disappointment. We had talked once before about the education of children, on an evening in town at Fitz's flat when he loved me & it had seemed a marvel of sympathy & agreement. It had remained one of my best memories of our life. I reminded him of it—he had said "you must have a child if you know all this." He had forgotten it—couldn't recall it. Still, we started the subject again—all my plans & suggestions treated with irritated contempt. And I thought we had had that![‡] It is very difficult because I can't make a just judgement between us. I suppose I am wrong to want to be loved & praised, not uncriticised, but encouraged. I can learn. He nags at me for my shortcomings—& perhaps I do too, but I think I sit most in a miserable heap & think.

[‡]*John Rodker:* I'm sorry you suffered so. I know I've been a dreadful brute. Forgive me.

Well, there is Cecil (1) & writing, (2) & an interesting child (3) (possibly). Order 2, 1, 3. I want a walking-stick of dark malacca with a shagreen & silver knob—I want a pair of gloves like cream to draw over my freckled arms. I want a car to go for a hard day's run in the mountains. I want to go home, Paris—London by aeroplane. I want a paddy chair to take away the pain in my back & a tree of ripe pears to pick all by myself. It doesn't seem contemptible to want them. Before the child is two months old, I shall be thirty.

And I can't catch hold of any solid truth except that we are a pair of very gifted, quite decent persons who are terribly intimate & quite unsuited. (Sentence means nothing again.) We don't live [make love] to-

gether now, not since the Cecil business—if he were to attempt it I should furiously refuse. That is probably irritating him—maybe me, but I have a horror of it. After all I am nearly six months gone—& didn't he say perpetually when I was light & strong & adoring him, how exigeante [demanding] I was, & what he would give for six months' celibacy! He can have it.

10 July 1920

I sat out on the terrace & watched the hill eat up the stars. One by one it rolled over them. One struggled a few moments in its hair. The kingdom of heaven is within you. I am pretty sure that I can foretell the future occasionally—only over matters which I feel keenly about. Then I can sometimes foresee not the outcome, but the degrees of light & dark.

13 July 1920

Play on Sally fairly begun.[36] Sketch for great comic character. Keep it pompous in phrase. Historical drama—reasons for use of history

(i) scope for stage picture.
(ii) elimination of modern inessentials—the same stuff crystallised out without local incident.
(iii) certain manifestations of passions only to be found in the past.

(ii) & (iii) are realistic—so much the better—two ways of doing the same thing—how 'modern' the 'ancients' were a truth yesterday, to-day & for ever in certain variant legends & crystallisation of ideas into myths. The late Elizabethans busy on the Borgia problem. *The White Devil*. Webster carried it pretty far & then the drama shied & after the Puritans appears as Restoration Comedy. Nothing since then ([Shelley's] *The Cenci*) till [Victor] Hugo. He inadequate.

17 July 1920

Last night the money came, £8.15/- for [my story] "Speed the Plough." Oh the feeling of being started. The Bank will swallow every penny in an overdraft I didn't know I had but *The Dial* wants more work. How noble

[36] Play unidentified. Never published.

is labour. How much better to earn money than to inherit it. How strong I am beginning to feel. Finish play. For a new story—correct "The Saint."

. . . last night I had remembered before I went to sleep that line of Leigh Hunt's "Like some grave, noble thought threading a dream" ["The Nile"]. And one of those dreams rose, whose mechanism may be part Freudian, but the core of whose content is not 'unrealised desire' in any plain physiological sense. I mean that it did not signify a Lesbian passion for my Aunt Irlam etc.[37] I don't remember who—but before some great person—a scholar (might have been one of my school teachers, once important) I brought off a number of arrangements between myself & certain persons I know well but can't now remember. The point was that I demonstrated something great in life & my own mastery over it. My own power was also augmented in their eyes. The great person says—"now sum it all up in your person what you have shewn us." It seemed (school again) that I had to say a poem. I tried to remember one that Landor never wrote, full of an inaudible dignity & obscure wisdom. I could only remember "I strove with none" [Landor, "On his seventy-fifth Birthday"] which wouldn't do. Then I remembered that I was a beautiful woman, & that people I had conquered were prepared even to adore that! I wore nothing, but made up my face & arranged my hair & wrapped my self in my grey paisley shawl so as to leave my arms & shoulder bare & the line of the stuff to come tight across my back, & under my arm-pits & across my breast. And I said the whole of "Dites-moi o, en quel pays" [Villon, "Ballade des dames de temps jadis"] & said that I was sorry, that it was all that I could remember & woke. I wasn't quite satisfied with the choice, but it seemed somehow appropriate. There was the "grave, noble thought" & I see it all now as a 'triumph' dream the censor passed because of *The Dial* success. But from whence the elation, "the eagles & the trumpets"?[38] Now could this be reconverted to the man's (or woman's) (but I want practice with men's) dream? A mixture of both. He could dream

[37] Butts's mother had five sisters: Annie Briggs (1860–1866) who died as a child; Ada Briggs (1861–1951) novelist and first woman parish councillor—she was largely responsible for bringing up Butts's and Rodker's daughter Camilla; Irlam (1867–1951), Royal Academy painter who was profoundly deaf; Monica (1872–1901), a talented musician who drowned near Salterns in mysterious circumstances; Agnes (187?-194?), a violinist. See 30 July 1920.

[38] Quotation from T. S. Eliot's "A Cooking Egg" in *Ara Vos Prec* (Ovid Press, February 1920). Butts would have known this poem intimately as she probably set the type for it.

first the vile books inside & then mine, & find that the books in the world were Horace & [Motley,] *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* & wonder which world was true. But mix up mine? Is it my old trick of putting in too many similes that muddles Homer? Dreams want tackling—now especially with Freud uncontaminated with Yang about, & so popular. It is undignified to run the gauntlet of anal eroticism-criticism—Yeats has protested; more protests & quick.

19 July 1920

Inventions. When he woke up & actually handled the books—he found them classics of nobility & wit. He read out a passage (say from Emerson) & found it less solid than the obscenities of his dream. So he questions the waking of reality, reading a passage.[39] Doubt of the awake reality? Dreams can have the most real quality. So in my dream, I looked for a noble passage & could not remember it & the one I chose though good, was a makeshift. (I might just have used my naked body—I really used a shawl half to hide it, & a poem to reveal it.) There are correspondences between his dream & mine—they will have to be worked in if they are to be read together. The point was that in both cases, once in the dream, once in the reality, the 'noble' thing wouldn't come, or didn't satisfy. The dream was dissatisfied with the dream, & the reality with reality. Then there was the relief of finding the reality after the vile dream, before the satisfaction faded. To get the dream solid & yet with some of its quality, like the hardness, colour, transparency of jewels or some enamels. Yesterday we heard of Johannes [F.—unidentified]'s suicide.

20 July 1920

No letters. To list of '4th world' writing. [Coleridge,] "The Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," "Kubla Khan," [Keats,] "La Belle Dame sans Merci" & some earlier poems of [William] Morris, & his prose romances.[40] Talked with Bim [Rodker]. He said "you say I know nothing about 'magic'—but that kind of poetry is the only poetry, the quintessence of writing to me. Milton & Shelley are just frills beside it & all gay,

[39] Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), American essayist, philosopher, and poet. Butts received her first copy of Emerson from her Aunt Ada when she was sixteen years old. His influence was lifelong. See Butts to Ada Briggs, 10 September 1929.

[40] William Morris (1834–96), British poet, editor, artist, and socialist visionary. Lifelong influence on Butts from childhood.

dancing poetry. Poetry to me is a matter of minor rhythms—some of which you say are the key of another world to you. But I don't call it another world, I just accept it, & can't have too much of it & would like to write like it." That reminded me of what Cecil had said, & I always tacitly I think recognised, that the Larve had an instinctive knowledge, less curious than ours but as instinctive. It is a 'bad' knowledge, his eyes have a horrible look when he is angry—like the idea of a vulture. It is all mixed up with the chastest appreciation of quintessential poetry—often with ballads which have no specially magical content at all. And he said charmingly when I told him that he gave us the creeps, that I did that "with a pair of magicians about the place, it was nice to be allowed to play too." There followed a dream 'more real than reality' whatever that means. I know now I remember it that I dreamed it before. Armistice night, a colonel miraculously back from the front, covered & stinking with blood, powder & sweat, talking to me about it in a room, till we were swinging to & fro with a rocking earth above a vast final battle, fire & noise, & triumphing, & huge rhythms—a cancelled out idea of war.

21 July 1920

Then came the most difficult clouding of the mind, most oblique perception of disaster that is the most near the truth. There was no direct certainty—I doubt if there ever is, I think the horror about must have a transmitter. I got into a state of impatience & disgust, & wandered about the garden in the thundery dark till very late. I walked in a circle, & crushed mint in my hands, & the sound & the scent nearly tranced me, but to no purpose, but a recrudescence of common sense. I made plans to be a good mother in contrast to the three hags I had in my mind, all very good, but it was too quiet a huge discomfort, like a fluid running through me. Today it was still there—when no news came from Cecil—nearly fear. After a sleep this afternoon almost clairvoyance. It is not a feeling of good & bad, almost an elation, as at some great event travelling to me like a cloud. It is not Johannes' death, & I cannot see myself with Cecil again. It is interesting—or will be—to see how much of it will turn out to have been sheer 'imagination.' Some special stress in Cecil's mind would, of course, be enough—the idea of following Johannes. Still more—that as the son of a priest the curse is working out. That raises the question—the eternal question, when is a thing true in itself, & when does it become true because you believe it? What is the 'difference' between these truths? The

Maitlands exemplify—many other families would have shaken their burden off. But then they were tangibly cursed by the great & annoyed church he left.[41] I have to force myself to wait.

24 July 1920

Yesterday a note & a wire. So he is still alive, but the note conveyed such forlornness, such despair as might well have accounted for my feeling. He said that between Johannes' death, & everything that had been before, a great gulf was fixed. It is, I am sure, enough to account for all that I felt. I died with him. Yesterday I felt like a half-rotted corpse forced to live again.‡ Life appeared too sad & bitter to live, the young moon & the evening stars tranquillised, & shewed its richness & variety along with its rawness & its shadowy fears. Where is the fun & energy with which I once kicked my way through? To-day there is nothing to be done but wait for the money, & dash off to Paris—sixteen hours rumble & stink for a journey which should take eight. Yesterday I worked. To-day should begin the new story, but it is all too undecided. Bruce's voyage to the source of the Nile—a heroic history in the exactest sense. I shall try & use it as a lesson, & shame myself out of petulance & fear. The memory of my mother—of the maternal relation—maddens me—that & other injustices done to me. John blames me for minding injustices—says he doesn't, only being interfered with. He is quite right, his trouble is the worst, but he expects a sterilised universe all the same. Here he is with a hard critical, untender character & he expects not one of his victims to turn & resent it. After Bruce, Mungo Park—another heroic adventure, but how pitiful.[42] How natural that one should have gone home to princely honours & a lovely old age, & one should have died out there horribly. It made me cry, that humble, sensitive, not very masterful man, insulted by the Moors, wandering about a beggar, buying his food with his buttons. Both he & Bruce made much the same joke to the ladies who wished to see them naked. I feel as though I were on an adventure with some of Bruce's temper & Mungo Park's means. It is vile to be so penniless as we are—not to have the nursery furniture for one's first & probably one's only baby. Not to be able to go home to a sick & worn-out Cecil. Not to buy a few decent presents. Not to buy off

‡*John Rodker:* Yes, but you had greed too.

[41] See Maitland's biographical outline.

[42] James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* (1790). Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior of Africa* (1799).

Jimmy—he sees too much of me. And he tries. It is pitiful to see him 'being kind.' I'm too raw to be comforted. I feel so despised—so held up to inspection & put back with a shrug, so graceless & shabby, so unsure of arriving. Cecil said that what I needed was courage, it has followed me all day like a shabby straying dog—I would like to sleep against Jimmy's shoulder, & have him cuddle me & understand all about it. And he won't & I feel as though his hardness—which is just a natural quality made by me worse—that I craved so to be loved without denigration. That's vanity. Another question on curses. If you personally were hard-headed & the agent that cursed you convinced & equipped for cursing (i.e. Church of Rome) would it, in spite of your scepticism, get round in you another way—find your weak place & work in? Then there is the question of your susceptibility to a curse because of a group-ancestral feeling on the subject predisposing you—like [Gilbert] Murray's man [unidentified] who at the end of a series of rationalistic agricultural experiments began to think of his sins. It is curious that I don't feel Eleanor now. Is it just fading, getting tucked away into the subconscious, or has it worn itself out or has she called it off? All questions without any answer. Oh after two months' "putting in my place"—I need some encouragement again. Yet we have had here a very good time, with some glorious hours, & some contemplation & wisdom, & marvellously improved health. Nothing is lost if I can kill the little worm nibbling at my mind. If it goes on I think I shall die with no rabbits caught. And it is no good saying "wait till I'm back with Cecil." He's a human being too, & we can only give each other a temporary consolation. It has all got to come out of myself (& out of the other world which destroys as much as it gives life).‡

‡*John Rodker:* All the same, you will never again be loved as I have loved you.

25 July 1920

I have seen it all now, I think—the elements that bring chaos & wretchedness into sound, rich elements of my life. Thwarted instincts—that is having to live a life on flinty sufficiency for which I was not bred. A second thwarting through rather unsuccessful work at the one thing I want to do well—want of recognition & assurance.‡ A finding out, which should have been done at nineteen of what 'people are really like,' their intense egoism—which I, spasmodically, share. These things left me raw & shrinking. The rawness & the shrinking engendered fear. Wherever I quieted one of my unquiets the want of money the in-

‡*John Rodker:* Sorry rabbit very very sorry!

justice with which I have been treated with regard to money ran round the circle & rubbed each part alive again & the heat ran from one part to the other. I went for reassurance to my husband & got none whatever. None of these troubles are his troubles, he wouldn't & couldn't understand.‡ I had scoldings for my want of courage & raw sensibilities & rages, deserved, & yet if I were to understand them the stupidest possible treatment. And there was always the poverty. It rubbed it in, each bit in turn—& the memory of the money my mother had had which would have given me relief. John would reduce everything to terms of the most unattractive righteousness—true, but so partial. "Her strength is your esteem, your praise/Will all her nobler actions move?"—if that were all the truth, he'd have to do without my "nobler actions."[43] I know, I ought to have known.‡ Do I understand him then, sympathise with his needs? It is no answer to say "he never asks me to." But I think it will gradually grow better now that I understand. There are Cecil & Ethel [Colburn Mayne] who believe in me & the child I shall have, & my looks, my wits & my vision, good health, the bare sufficiency of money, the dawning power to earn more, a rich curiosity, love of living, power to attract, some teeth cut. Lord, let now thy servant, begin again in peace. ‡

‡*John Rodker:* Yes, I always wanted you to. But you were stupid & I was too proud to explain.

‡*John Rodker:* Some day you will perhaps forgive me.

‡*John Rodker:* Amen.

END OF DIARY AT S. BERTRAND DE COMMINGES

On their way back to England they stop over a few days in Paris where on the 27 July Rodker "and his wife, the author Mary Butts, took Joyce and his family to dinner."[44] *This is the first time Butts meets James Joyce. Butts and Rodker return by ferry on the 28 July.*[45]

[43] The exact lines from "The Marriage Sermon" by the British poet Coventry Kersey Dighton Patmore (1823–96) are:

> Her strength is your esteem; beware
> Of finding fault; her will's unnerved
> By blame; from you 'twould be despair;
> But praise that is not quite deserved
> Will all her nobler nature move.

[44] Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism,* 46

[45] "Back [in London] to debts—end of [Ovid] Press," Rodker to Wallace Stevens, 28 July 1920, in Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism,* 46.

30 July 1920 Milnethorpe [Poole, home of Butts's aunts, Ada and Agnes Briggs]

Since leaving S. Bertrand I have run through a significant sequence—I saw the money want like a wheel with rockets inside my close hand, the palm sensitive with blows. It returned but backwards, each reopening each sensitive place. The image was complete. I. I laid a finger on the interior wound. It closed. Now this image is the link between every experience, & tranquillises each. II. Then in Paris there was Joyce—the 'touch of truth' between us & the world, between John & I, between Greek & pure letters & once impure minds & senses.‡ Southampton water like a blue pearl. Tea, six o'clock sun. Tea & bacon & eggs. English air met crisp, sparkling tasting. My Aunts' house where I have not a single bad memory. Two miles from Salterns [Butts's birthplace]. Tony & Mother there. My old room, a long way below Aunt Agnes' violin. What they told me was happening at Salterns.[46]

‡*John Rodker:* You said "Thank you for the lovely way you have taken care of me."

Butts spends August at a house party at Welcombe House, Bude, Cornwall, with Rodker, Maitland, Oliver Strachey, Fitz, and Peter Taylor and others.[47]

6 August 1920

The change in Cecil as I understand it. Come to an end of all earthly resources by the time we met intimately, last February. Violent illumination from outside, by me—a certain dependence on me. (But that was the best erotic fortnight of my life—our lives.) Separation—in which he found my magic no longer worked. Last strain, Johannes' suicide finished the business. When I came back I found him shut up, with a secret confidence, like a man with his arms round a stone. This change he described to me. It was a final anguish, everything went he reviewed his subjection to anguish of mind that had grown up in him. His resentment rose to a final point. Something broke. He saw it another way. He could only give me an idea of it like this—Suppose that there is a disproportion somewhere in nature,

[46] Butts's mother is selling off part of the Salterns land and the adjacent tenancies, prior to the actual auction of Salterns in June 1923.

[47] Oliver Strachey (1874–1960), British civil servant. His wife Rachel (Ray) Conn Strachey, née Costelloe (1887–1940), British suffragette and campaigner for women's rights may also have been there.

that to bring about the union of the pairs of opposites; a scapegoat has to be made for the disproportion of misery. I think there is an idea there. Christ called it bearing the sins of the world.‡ I used to do it & escape it like a tortured beast. Now I see it part of something co-extensive with everything else. I'm not going to shirk it any more, but see what it means, where it goes. Along with the idea which gave him confidence came the idea of a vileness in all his past life—not exactly in action, & not so much vileness as futility. Drink & whoring as motifs no more significant. Then came the grim alternative—"Go on & remake your life—outside the limits of your personality. Three years—if you can't, if the new exalted formulae work no better than the old, there is something you can't help, kill yourself." He will. That gave him the touch of grim isolation that froze me. Now this is the phenomenon of initiation or conversion repeated in every one. I was the drug, the initiation, the preacher, the passage from 'the Word' that started it. He is doing the rest for himself, & no longer depends on me.

‡*John Rodker:* But you were afraid of my sins. Why? Because there was no crown of thorns to go with it.

19 August 1920

It is not necessary to describe them in detail—the core of the affair is—there are various ways of saying it—he [Cecil] is a man under a doom. He has had from his childhood the perception of the dark place in reality, what we call the Abyss. (The "condition of fire" [from *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*] is not all light & rest, Yeats is wrong.)[48] He has understood Dostoevsky's "metaphysical obscenity"—absolute misery. It has been more than a conception, a perception. He has lived in it. As he says, there is no hope for him. The physical anger of exasperated, perhaps not logical man, is suicide. This he has nearly done, on reasons several times. Now, it seems because of this nature of his, he is attacked & sometimes—evidently the object, nearly possessed by what would have been called a devil. He can fight the devil—but only to die, I think, deliberately, by his own hand, in a year or so unless he can get hold of reality by the opposite of the reality he has seen. His great reality is the Abyss. The other side of the Abyss is something like the beatific vision. To see that a man must come out of his inward looking, stop gnawing his own breast. He must let everything go & throw himself out. He will come back with his fists full of reality. Now I can be auxiliary in fighting the immediate devil—but

[48] See [June 1920].

what I want to do is help him to that—The great magical work. As he noticed—when he wants to fight the immediate desire, he does so by frightening it with his strong will—I don't feel quite like that—I'd use my will, but as if I hovered over & gathered up in my hands. Something to do with the pairs of opposites & with Sophrosynê. My brain is tired—there is no refreshment here for the emotions—I want too desperately to act. I don't know what to do.

3 September 1920 [43 Belsize Park Gardens, London]

In the ritual of 'letting go' I have developed a new image. I look out through a round window in the wall as I fall back. Outside is that particular blue sky, crossed by a black pine branch & trunk, & white doves. I look at this (memory of Salterns at midsummer, Aubrey's room, the round window in the wall at S. Egliston, & the 'well' dream I had once had as a child.)[49] (Or more?) The 'well' dream extends.[50] I drop down & at one point fall into a 'layer' of another country. Yesterday I was resting, troubled—snags. I tried to reach my tranquillity it seemed a long way off—at the end of a telescope. I thought of the round window & pulled myself through. This produced a sleepiness that passed & strong results—luminous pure understanding.

6 September 1920 [43 Belsize Park Gardens, London]

A signature? The third lamp on the wall brackets went out. I regretted it because it would be difficult to buy another & a little perfection was gone. I forgot it & it came on again.

7 September 1920

Last night a singular affair with Cecil. He came up to dinner. I felt an estrangement. At dinner he began, in complete & maddening naiveté this account. "I have been with Sally. It is rather trying. She is writing a play, & it's quite good. She's put an awful romantic version of me in it—called me Wilfrid." We pressed coldly for details. There followed—"I come in

[49] With Salterns and Corfe Castle, S. Egliston was one of Butts's magical places. Cecil Aubrey Tillbrook Butts (1861–1885), Butts's half-brother. The son of Captain Frederick Butts and his first wife, Eleanor Stanbridge. Aubrey died in a boating accident off the Dorset coast in 1885.

[50] See 20 June 1920.

drunk. There is a long discussion on suffering. She made me out as a kind of Christ." Said I "Russia out of Shaw, Sally is going it." Cecil grinned. The Larve [Rodker] licked his lips. I have never been so humiliated. She had taken my most secret & delicate intuition, something which is put away in my mind with the secrecy of love, certain things in art, & greek words, only to be taken out & brooded on as a quintessence, an unspeakable experience only to be translated with most fastidious care, & under the medium of my own trade presented me with its image in icing sugar & cake. Cecil had swallowed it all—though to do him justice, I think it had only got across to him as funny. We just turned away, she nearly ruined our relation. How narrowly we saved it—I only just know, Cecil knows. She is certainly succeeding in making our relation difficult.‡ (Stuff here for a story in my own genre.) Line to the Larve "men were deceivers ever" [Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*]. Turn your shame to profit.‡ One of the points I think is that we have underestimated the necessity of Sally's megalomania to her. We have shewed her up to herself less noble than she might have been. All this may be a necessity to her to reestablish her slightly shaken self-respect.

‡*John Rodker:* And still you loved him. But when I behave like that you hate me. Why did you say before I went away that you would give him up if I really wanted your love and not a bargain? But perhaps you did not mean it.

‡*John Rodker:* Oh Mary how I wish you had tried. Perhaps I too would have understood.

19 September 1920

Yesterday & the night preceding it, I knew that Cecil was in hostility to me (like two planets in opposition). I tried by an indescribable process to understand it—rather by the help of an image of a guardian spirit out of Abramelin.‡ I got some kind of indescribable answer. I did get something which the mind refuses to reduce to terms. Something small, brown-grey, & flinty "a small stone instead of the heart's desire." Something which he would cling round instead of embracing me, something ugly he liked better & rightly. (Something perhaps which would hurt him, & he would tear off from to hold to me again.) Finished the story of the man in the library. Inventions for new story on Sally's horror. It will want rather more narrative. A young woman who has seen her lover as a 'kind of Christ'—sexual motif in the crucifixion story. Through sensual worship of his torment arrived at a very delicate, profound adoration, a very friendly & helping love. There will have to be a solid 'invention'—how did he get like that? And it might be nauseating. And it must be candid. The rest is

‡*John Rodker:* Oh Mary you have pursued him more intently than you ever did me. And you told me you did not love him.

easy, another woman gets the idea (how?) & travesties it to his lover, through his vain, innocent, a ??? mouth. Her knock out. Finis.

25 September 1920

Very ill & tired—but not at all bewitched. A real morbidity of pregnancy at last, an utterly detached wretchedness, like falling away into a dense wet cloud. One enjoys it. There is a sense of adventure. I have noticed that I am much less concerned with people's feelings & opinions, much brusquer, remoter than I used to be. The fear-devil points his darts with money worries. We have to hope for—

(i)	~~The Dial~~	no good.
(ii)	Sale of press	" "
(iii)	Blandine	?????????????
(iv)	Wadsworth	" "
(v)	John's father.	Pram. Apart from that we have a little income
(vi)	Cinema play	no good.
(vii)	Drama play	???? (John very optimistic)

Idea for new story. Cecil came—we spent the day a little sensually but mainly tranquilly, pleased to be together. We were tired out. It was all right to stretch ourselves on chains & say so. A small stone instead of the heart's desire, but we quite liked it. I am enjoying the anguish of having had nothing—only misunderstanding of what his detachment is. It may be a process where I may have my part again.

26 September 1920

Instead of the heart's desire—I know too much & I desire too much. Get something to do & live through it. A girl sits on the top of wood & watches them do interesting things (told in the first person). The mother & the Son. She is pregnant. At her house to work. The boy comes to see her. Lies. Fatigue.[51]

27 September 1920

Last night all through the night we were lovers again. It came out in a world of magic "where the lilies are & the fanged silken beasts." It has

[51] Butts calls this story "Pregnancies" and then "Change." Never anthologised, this story was published in *The Dial*, 72 (May 1922), 465–470.

gone with the morning & getting the breakfast. The brief bites famish me. What let in last night's dream was the beauty of Dorothy Pound [Ezra's wife] in a silver-blue cloak & a round hat of curled feathers & fur at her wrists & neck & shoes of grey crocodile skin.

18 October 1920

What I wrote as similitudes in *Ashe* & signatures has come out. He [Cecil] is the possessed & will go away from me as I foresaw. I am unattractive—for another month & more. He is thinking how to get away from me. I will not do what my mother did & cling about him with a grievance. He can't be bullied or frightened out of it. Life must push out death. But I have still life—but he suspects me. I might have demanded more. Pride & delicacy may be liars. I long for dreams & fear them. The Larve is good to me. But only I saw Cecil in his divine shape, last May. If anything is to be done—I must keep my sensual beauty. Eight & a half months gone with child! And if I do it that way I may lose everything—for nothing. Take the risk.‡ I may not have the courage—I may exaggerate it all because of my fear. (I don't think that. ??? awful to see). If there was a 'devil' its word has been made flesh with a vengeance.

‡*John Rodker:* Yes take the risk. I don't want your duty—or to be a pis aller—or some poor funk as when you married me.

21 October 1920

Saw the book about teleplasm at May Sinclair's.[52] An idea about Sally—explanation of the succubus. (Several times lately I have felt a touch on my shoulder.) A story could be made out of the idea that came to me. Sally by means of a teleplasm sucking at his life.

22 October 1920

No infant yet. I have re-read *Ashe*. More than ever it seems to have been a signature for what is about to happen. (The copy returned from the Ingrams was incomplete.) I sent it clean to those scrupulous, half-scholarly people. It has come back greased, torn, as if it had been outraged.) [T. S. Eliot's] *Ara Vos Prec*?[53] Gwen Ingram not so friendly.

[52] Butts refers to this book as "the new one on the 'materialisations' in Mde [sic] Brisson the French sculptor's studio—with the most extraordinary photographs." Butts to Ada Briggs, undated [postmark 24 October 1920], Butts papers.

[53] See note to 17 July 1920

27 October 1920

No infant. Last night tried explanations with Cecil who said that for the past weeks he had been crazy with desire for suicide. This partly explained—no comfort.

3 November 1920

No baby. Write a story about John's désoeuvrement.

8 December 1920

Camilla Elizabeth born Nov 7th[54] at 5.35 evening. Cecil attempt at suicide.[55] Our agreement *Ashe* to appear in the *The Little Review*.[56] Camilla home. The end of having 'sought a burden.' The birth was soon over, three days subsequent horrors of discomfort, & tears every morning. I cried when they woke me—brought in the baby at seven. There was frost outside & bare trees, & fog, & sometimes the panes across the tennis courts gilt with the sun & Cecil was like a dumb malignant stone, (a stone that cries in the night, & tries to be a seat by day.) I cried because it had gone & between times read *Macbeth*. A play about a winter dusk when the moon hangs out & it is going to freeze. Every morning I said "Come sealing night scarfe up the tender eyes of pitiful day" [*Macbeth*] until I worked it into an evocation for tears & longing past thought, & puny hopes. She had been born ten days when he told me about the poison he had taken. 1 bottle chlorodyne, cocaine 6 grains & the two narcotics had neutralised & half killed him & with it the desire. So we got each other back & a few days torments of doubts & scruples. For me it's a hard choice—care for him, love John, work for him with him, & deceive John or hurt him, or both.‡ Or send Cecil away & lose—the honeyed thing, the rest & kindness, the use of my power, the unearthly blessedness. I also saw that my heart-searchings were another name for funk. We said suddenly "God's children will look after themselves." Since then it has been simpler. Camilla home. Well, I could

‡*John Rodker:* Both BOTH

[54] In fact it was the 10 November.

[55] An event later fictionalised in Butts's story "The Dinner Party."

[56] In fact only the first five chapters of *Ashe of Rings* appeared in *The Little Review* (1921) due to lack of funding. See 3 May 1921. For more details see correspondence between Ezra Pound and Margaret Anderson in Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 101. Also Butts to Anderson, 30 November 1920 and Butts to Jane Heap, 6 July 1923, Little Review Papers, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

do without her. It is no ecstacy but a job. Here & for ever it can be said that Jimmy has helped me as not one father in a thousand (or any father I have ever heard of) ever helped. Then he loves her more than I. "A little girl child" he said. And he's kind, but he is beginning to hate Cecil. It's the next turn of the screw. I must get well, I must get well—to go out to him. If I had not told John at S. Bertrand.‡ What is known in the 4th world, does not always come out again. I comfort myself that it would have been the same anyhow.

‡*John Rodker:* But if you had told me all and not just the vulgar expression I could have understood, perhaps sympathised.

9 December 1920

I have heard about Tony & my mother & the vile conversations at Salterns. I see now that from the time I left them ten years ago I have 'sought a burden.'‡ That is I went out to look for reality. It was not in politics or the poor or learning or lovers or economics. Then John came along & said 'wear my yoke.' I've worn it proudly.‡ Now & then I've tossed my head. And I've learned—a kind of fundamental aesthetic & vision. *Ashe* was the last fumbling, Cecil the adieu. I'm through. There remains however a month old girl child for the figure in the outer world, a number of debts, & a 'situation' between Jimmy & Cecil. It will delay the winding up.‡ Meanwhile they will not let me rest. "The wide world dreaming on things to come" [Shakespeare, Sonnet 107]. The end of having sought a burden.

‡*John Rodker:* You will remember me after all as a very deep peace. You will be sorry.

‡*John Rodker:* I have been reading your old letters to me. There is nothing you say about your lover that you have not said to me or about me.

‡*John Rodker:* No, it has wound it up.

11 December 1920

"Pregnancies" to be finished. "Afterbirths" (i) snatches of liberty in the streets. For *The Little Review*. Note. There is no 'secret of motherhood.' Another note. I love Cecil because of the delicious states he evokes in me. Now this is a cheap cynicism, but it might be examined further.

12 December 1920

Birthday tomorrow. Twenty nine or thirty.‡ There is yesterday's blessedness. It is extremely hard to write about that

‡*John Rodker:* Dec 1890.[57]

[57] Formerly I have agreed with Rodker's interpretation of this comment by Butts that she was unsure of her age. Now I think he was mistaken and believe she meant twenty-nine today (12 December 1920), thirty tomorrow (13 December 1920).

sort of thing. I remember the taxi coming back when I lay conventionally in his [Cecil's] arms & then knew he was in an extasie of his own & held my breath. I remember the drink & the fun & the long peace over the fire. I remember the blind spells of passion. I remember though we could not have each other when I made him lie down beside me & what happened. It was like falling into a thick dark cloud, & enduring at the same time a physical sweetness I have never before conceived of. It was unthinkable—a consummation of the completest sort when only our lips touched & our ankles. Talk of Joyce! When we got up—sixty seconds later—we could not stand, but clung waving on our feet. He took me up to the glass. "Look at yourself." We looked in side by side. We might have been twelve & ten years old—we were so young & drunk with bliss.

16 December 1920

Two nights later. Well, it is a good thing my paisley shawl is silent.‡ I remember sharply two things, one felt, one seen. I remember the touch of his fine thin ankles on mine. That excites me. I remember that he raised himself once on his elbow & looked away, & he was happy. Never seen his face like that before, even the twist to his mouth had no longer any significance of pain. He held his head so easily. Later I remember holding Camilla with her bottle over the fire & she sucked & squalled when I took it away & I nodded over her remembering him. Next morning I took my Bickara cigarettes up to the bathroom to bask in hot water & reconstruct & it was cold! I didn't get a hot one till he turned it on last night. In the day between I quarrelled with John. That isn't fair—about money of course. Perhaps love will reach that point of blessedness when I shan't feel a point of anger with John any more, & we shall be blessed spirits together. Invincible optimism—but anything might come out of this—the 'white patch' I foresaw but would not anticipate. Last night—I'd been worried all day about the dragon—Cecil in a hot bath—& we fixed for Saturday. We were like two partners before an expedition of some moment, assuring the final details, winding up all previous affairs. It was fun—God! how one enjoys it. No wonder people are afraid of pleasure. (Lately a course of Dostoevsky. I read *Crime & Punishment*—Cecil's one. All my thinking in problems is superficial. I shall read a book of the noblest thoughts, & [Mirbeau's] *Jardin des Supplices*—the range of our love.)

‡*John Rodker:* I shall never forget this. Here in this house you told me it was only once.

20 December 1920

On Sunday I knew nothing—(where is our telepathy!) On Saturday night he [Cecil] shot himself with J[ohannes] F's revolver. He was taken to Paddington Hospital where he is now. It is not supposed that he will die. He wrote to me. This afternoon I went to his mother. I went there & a nurse turned me away "because it was not convenient."

21 December 1920

Outside they are singing "Adesti Fideles" ["O Come all ye faithful"]. Then Ford [Madox Ford] came.

23 December 1920

No time to write. Yesterday I was with him [Cecil]. To-day—in a long extasie—& underneath an exchange to the despair he felt—that we were peering into heaven who had to pay a tithe to hell [ref. to "Tam Lin."] Yet I believe my whole intuition. Even if he dies.

30 December 1920

For the next few days we were together, extasie culminating in utter physical collapse for me. Now Jimmy will give me no peace. Jealousy, which is natural, & the instinct men have to edge out the wound.

1921

3 January 1921

I have had an eternity of emotions with a man whose life voluntarily—is not worth six months.

A packed wild year. How to formulate Cecil's story—my sensuality gives veins & nerves to the most obvious incidents.

What I have given, he gives me back—I'm so little used to that I'm afraid to receive it.

It is an affair complete in both worlds. I suppose all affairs are, but what makes this unique, is that I can, to an extent, *watch* it in both. To keep watch & experience passion in two worlds—I do not envy any adept.

I have the sweetness of love to fold myself in. "And so he giveth his Belovéd—" [Psalm 127]

I am just aware that what passed for the significant events of the day are not the significant events. I don't mean that they are signatures, crossed sticks in the Rue Cardinal le Moine, but like lumps of coal sprinkles over a photograph—or a cinema screen to conceal what is going on behind.[1] They are not the conscious hypocrisies. They seem important, & the time moving screen behind them—*more trivial*. Apart are the elemental powers, facts, perceptions, ecstacies. To fix that dim screen would make difficult writing—prose with the events left out. Usually one is content to describe events with what Huysmans calls their 'oversoul' or to try for rare images & contents of the mind.

4 January 1921.

"In a wood is a bird, its song stops you, makes you blush—" etc. Rimbaud.[2] One kind of perception. "In the gulley there is a nest of white animals . . . When you are hungry & tired there is someone who drives you away" ["Enfance" in *Illuminations*]

Also—"He who could bend all things to his will

Has covered the doors of the infinite fold" etc [Yeats, "Impetuous Heart" from *The Countess Cathleen*].

Also—"the years like great black oxen" [Yeats, *The Countess Cathleen*].

[1] "Crossed sticks." See 22 August 1918.

[2] Arthur Rimbaud (1854–91), French poet.

Also—the opening of an Arnold Bennett novel.

The first is what we are driving after—irrelevant reality; or relevant with a new subtlety. An insect is profoundly irrelevant, hence pathetic fallacy. Rimbaud.

5 January 1921

Last night. It frightens me to be loved like that. There is love which is hate & terror & surrender like a coronation.

How can I meet my unspeakable debt to this man [Maitland]?

■ ■ ■

20 February 1921

John read this [journal]. He left me. I waited three days & went away with Cecil Maitland [to Swanage, Dorset]. We stayed in a furnished room. Its balcony overhung the bay. The spray flew in at the windows.

John came back [from Sennen, Cornwall].[3] His letters were like pieces of teleplasm spewed out of the Grey Thing.

It is an event to begin to write again.

22 February 1921

People stay the same—but they lose contact with each other. They stop evoking the thing that the other likes. The only hope is to 'let go.' But it is the most shocking thing in life that the intense contact should not be in man's control.

People 'act' & spoil it all. They lose their pattern & become dancing dolls.

The magical secret seems to me to be simply this. The Great Work is to discover an automatic strengthening & intensification for the will. To have it one should know to will, & who does?

Mary Butts and Cecil Maitland travel to the continent where they stay until September.

[3] By coincidence Butts moves to Sennen in 1932, spending her final and most productive years there.

7 March 1921 [Paris]

It is not anything but to discover one's own will & do it (the real conclusion Freud will not admit).

The magical chain winds on. "Here beside my Paris fine" I see it unwind & stir.

When Cecil & John's & my time came, the people (and the places) came too. Badbury Rings, Tony, Aleister Crowley* who is in Cecil's part & for me Nina [Hamnett] & Paris. Also Joyce & the interpretation of Mr Bloom [in *Ulysses*].

I am now going to live the best part of my life.

11 March 1921

Aleister Crowley. 1st degree of initiation.

15 March 1921

No success with Crowley's receipt for going on to the astral plane.[4] But when I write, or am moved in certain oblique ways, I do it inevitably. Is magic too direct an approach? All profound perception is in some way or seems to be in some way oblique. *Then* it is fruitful. Direct magical practice fatigues & rather disgusts me (I except the evocations & the earth pentagrams).

18 March 1921

A signature? The children of the concierge play marbles in the tiled entrance. They drew three triangles in chalk there yesterday. Cecil needs magical protection. Three triangles make up the pentagram . . .

31 March 1921

Last night at Aleister's we talked of the "thrice born" & the third perception. I see my mistake—I used to think my rare states of extasie sufficient in themselves if I could get them oftener, & in themselves a kind of satisfactory proof that the finale of the universe or its extension in eternity was on satisfactory lines.

[4] Astral Journey: An out-of-body experience through meditative visualisation.

Aleister's analysis fitted in with what I have begun to guess. He spoke about the twice born people whose final experience is the "trance of sorrow." . . . This, in mysticism, corresponds to the Buddhist analysis—that *everything* is pain, pain cancels out all phenomena, *nothingness* is the only goal, complete cessation of being.

Then Aleister spoke of the thrice born, & the third perception, which he tried to rationalise.

I hold that it wants rationalisation. People are only just getting born to realise it. It is still a matter for 'faith.'

Aleister began: "Every soul is a star. Consider the orbits of stars. Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law."

It is good practice to notice a phenomenon & its antithesis. The thing is I suppose to look at a quality rather than an object.

4 April 1921

Write a story about the moment when the word which has never been made flesh, is about to be spoken.

13 April 1921

Did a mantra yesterday, huge, terrifying success.

Explored the part of Paris that lies behind the Quai St Michel, between Chacornac's shop & Notre Dame. There is a magical relation between that shop & the Church.[5]

I want to 'magic up' John Rodker in Cornwall. Can't think of a way.

14 April 1921

I have an idea all the time that any man is only separated from his perfection by a razor's edge.

It is easy to mistake one's idealism for the daimon.

The thread through this mysticism lies exceedingly deep inside oneself. How hard it is to dig out—how easy to mistake a bright idea for it.

19 April 1921

I had seen on the night of the last entry what may have been Bernard Walke's sitting room, & John leaning against the mantle-shelf explaining

[5] First mention of the idea which is at the heart of Butts's story "Mappa Mundi," written in 1936. But see 1927 note 7.

his wrongs to two or more people.[6] Cecil saw a white room with beams, John writing play at a table . . . gave the plot of the play.[7]

This must be looked up—it would be good evidence.

A few days ago we began to discuss what we really wanted 'in magic.'

I. I want to study & enjoy & to enter if I can into the fairy world, the mythological world & the world of the good ghost story. I see them like three triangles moving into a circle.

II. I want by various mystical practices & studies to produce my true nature & enlarge my perceptions.

III. I don't only want to find my true will, I want to do it. So I want to learn how to form a magical link between myself and the phenomena I am interested in.

IV. I want to find out what is the essence of religion, study the various ideas of God under their images.

V. I want to make this world into material for the art of writing.

VI. I want to observe the pairs of opposites, remembering that that which is below is as that which is above. From this I wish to formulate clearly the hitherto incommunicable idea of a third perception. This is a perception of the nature of the universe as yet unknown to man except by intuitions which cannot be retained & by symbols whose meaning cannot be retained also. I want to fix it in man's mind.

VII. I want to write a book not about an early theocracy & fall of man (the most respectable occultists fail here [e.g.] Stanislas de Guaita) but a book written about this subject, *historically under terms of human fallability without deification of Pythagoras or the writers of the Kabala*.[8] A book with no balls about secrets, or sneers at the uninitiated. Above all with no worship of the past. A book to shew the relation of art to magic, & shew the artist as the true, because the oblique, adept.

[6] Nicolo Bernard Walke, Anglo-Catholic priest, famously associated with his ministry at St Hilary's Church, Marazion, Cornwall. Butts and Walke become close friends in the 1930s.

[7] Rodker is indeed finishing an experimental opera "Orpheus and Eurydice" in Sennen at this time. It is never performed. MS is in Rodker papers, Harry Ransom Center, Texas.

[8] Stanislas de Guaita (1861–97), French occultist, founder of the Cabbalist order of the Rose-Croix (1888).

Isn't one page of [Yeats,] *Per Amica* worth every *Equinox* considered as the thing in itself?[9]

23 April 1921

Modern writing the same problem as in painting—to get the reality whether impressionistic or not—with the structural unity of the old masters.

3 May 1921

Ashe not to appear—watched myself minding about it.[10]

11 May 1921

Took an astral journey before going to sleep.

15 May 1921

Another journey last night. I observe that when my image has first risen in the air & opened its eyes, it is either in the pine wood behind [a neighbour] Miss Everett's house or in a similar wood outside the Green Gate at Salterns.

There are times when the ménage à deux even with the most beloved is not what I want. I want a hole of my own from where I can go out to meet him.

Life is in layers—where does this come in, the sensation of pleasure when the full teapot is lighter by the cup you are pouring out?

'Cup' here is not the china cup but the idea of a quantity.

Yeats says that someone else says that a famous great man can become your daimon. I would know the name of mine.

18 May 1921

Aleister Crowley must know by now that we are playing for time with regard to Cefalu i.e. that we won't come to him unless driven there by poverty or are reassured as to his intentions.[11]

[9] *Equinox:* Crowley's occult journal, see note 17.
[10] See note for 8 December 1920.
[11] Cefalu: see 7 July 1921.

I wondered one night whether *Ashe* was all prophecy & Serge a ghost for Cecil, I for Van. That would mean money.

20 May 1921

Yesterday John [Rodker] came.

22 May 1921

As I went up the Luxembourg Gardens that night with John I saw that I give as much misery & astonishment as illumination & pleasure. I cannot bear that it should be like that.

25 May 1921

A priestly house. Alkmaionids, Eumolpidoi, Blake, I, Camilla?[12]

3 June 1921

Last night was amusing.[Tommy] Earp, Dodo [unidentified], Hilda [Doolittle, H.D.], Berenice [Abbott], Cecil & I.[13] The three cabarets.

I saw my beauty in a hundred mirrors, it wore well. I could dance & I drank.

4 June 1921

No daimon, no money, no adventures, much irritation. I am wrong to blame Cecil for the choice he forces on me. Would I blame any man in such a case? I want to turn him into an enemy every time I get a heart-broken note from John.

7 June 1921

The last turn. John's refusal to get me my money. Ezra [Pound] on "John Rodker & his women & children."

[12] The Alkmaionids: a noble family in Ancient Athens involved in rebuilding the Delphic Temple. The Eumolpidae: guardians of the Eleusinian mysteries.

[13] Thomas W. Earp (1892–1958), British poet and critic. Hilda Doolittle, "H.D." (1886–1961), American Imagist poet. Married to the British writer Richard Aldington. Her affair with the British composer and writer Cecil Gray leads to birth of their daughter, Perdita, whose upbringing is primarily organised by Bryher, H.D.'s long-term companion. Great admirer of Butts's work, see Introduction. Berenice Abbott (1898–1991), American photographer, Man Ray's assistant during the 1920s in Paris.

9 June 1921

Now my head is full of lays & ballads—"fire & fleet & candle-light" ["A Lyke-Wake Dirge," trad.] & "Hynd Horn's free" ["Hynd Horn," trad.]—dark, lovely, dreadful lines, things I saw as a child.

20 June 1921

Jimmy [Rodker] & I went out. I took him to the Parc Montsouris. We lunched. I tried to be cold & remember my wrongs, but we got friendly—I saw that *whatever* he was, my grievances were phenomenal rubbish.

Later we talked about the third perception & I explained pretty clearly but without emotion. I think that is because he really knows nothing whatever about it. Our positions are reversed—I am [for John] "a great red-haired woman, too much for me."

7 July 1921 [At Crowley's magical 'retreat,' the Abbey of Thelema in Cefalu, Sicily][14]

When I write—I have in the last few years discovered the oblique approach & the ambiguous statement to convey the sharpest truth.

During her time at Cefalu Mary Butts edits Ashe of Rings*. She also takes several drugs (hashish, opium, cocaine) while undertaking the various tasks set by Crowley. These include meditation, magic, and yoga exercises and keeping a diary, which Crowley discusses with her.*

11 July 1921

The astral journey—blue water, a solid lapis-lazuli stuff pouring about the base of a rock, or out of a rock like a basin on a pedestal and splashing round.

Young man . . . shewed me a round mirror on the floor, which had a bright sky in it—white, with shaking boughs.

20 July 1921

Astral journey.

Precipice, falling pine-trees, a huge blue-black bird darting down (in-

[14] For a more detailed account of Butts's six-week stay at Cefalu, see Blondel, Mary Butts, 102–6.

finite confusions) into a circle of fire. A tranquil Hobbema landscape. A sphinx. Then the dark cave, a furious sea breaking through it this time—white water. I was afraid—went through—water sucking through a kind of blow-hole, then the open coast, black rocks & white sea rising, a frightful place. Then, as the spray rose, a shaft of light came down, & mixed, & the two mixed & whirled till I came back unable to hold it any longer.

30 July 1921

Astral journey.

Revisited alchemical plane, the cave with water. Tried to get away from it, by what Crowley calls "rising on the planes." Tried to look like Hermes.

Immediately got my Fragonard wood path (which is a kind of astral version of the Lavender Walk at Salterns). So much of this is an exalted version of Salterns 'seen in another world.'

1 August 1921

There are two kinds of illumination that I know, one that clears up some point, & makes it significant for ever—i.e. that time at the ballet when I understood & for good the fundamental unity of its designs. *Or* a vague extasie, infinitely enjoyable, 'blessed,' but transitory, & leaving generally not even a memory.

4 August 1921

Read more [of] Crowley's biographia mystica [*Magick*.][15]

Hebrew letters
Asana [yoga pose] etc
Astral journey.
New story.

[15] *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1929). Butts's knowledge of the occult clearly impressed and assisted Crowley: "I showed the manuscripts [of *Magick*] to Soror Rhodon [Mary Butts] and asked her to criticise it thoroughly. I am extremely grateful to her for her help, especially in indicating a large number of subjects which I had not discussed. At her suggestion I wrote essay upon essay to cover every phase of the subject. The result has been the expansion of the manuscript into a vast volume, a complete treatise upon the theory and practice of Magick, without any omissions." *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley,* ed. John Symonds and Kenneth Grant (New York: Bantam, 1971), 1018.

The new story is to have no mystic vibration of any kind. It can have an abstract pattern derived from the varieties of meditation.[16]

7 August 1921

Read [Craddock's] *Heavenly Bridegroom*.[17]

15 August 1921

The weather here is enchanting. High winds for three days, huge clouds, an audible sea up here on the hillside. We've bathed in rollers, not in a crystal toy. We've slept out night after night, seen the stars move across, cuddled up together for warmth at dawn in a chill wind. The other side of the rock is a huge sea with spray columns & rainbows.

I guess my judgement is made—I'd sooner be the writer I am capable of becoming than an illuminated adept, magician, magic master of this temple or another.

If this business is to be the next conquest of the human mind, it will have its place in art (it has always had its place in art). Art is it, presented by the oblique approach. The direct—is not my business.

16 August 1921

Read when my three days' vow not to is over—

Some Verlaine, [Flaubert's] *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, Aphra Behn, finish Sinistrari [*Demoniality*, trans. Liseux (1921)].[18] Some Dr Dee. [Hardy's] *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (complex about novels, because they rouse my fear of life).

[16] Probably "Bellerophon to Anteia," in which the hero describes his exile in a place where "I stood on stone at the edge of a round pool that was open to the sky. . . . I was so pleased with the double circle of sky and water, a blue lid over a blue plate." This is very close to the astral journey Butts had three weeks earlier, see 11 July 1921. First published in *Speed the Plough and Other Stories* (1923), "Bellerophon to Anteia" was republished in *With and Without Buttons: The Selected Stories of Mary Butts,* selected with an afterword by Nathalie Blondel (Manchester: Carcanet, 1991), 185–7, 186.

[17] Probably Crowley's copy. Ida Craddock (who believed she was married to an angel) completed *Heavenly Bridegroom* by 1895. It was published in a magazine in the 1910s and reviewed (positively) by Crowley in *Equinox,* 3, 1 (1919), 280.

[18] Ludovico Maria Sinistrari (1622–1701), Italian priest, writer, and translator. *Demoniality* or *Incubi and Succubi* is a treatise claiming that there exist on earth rational creatures besides human beings, endowed like them with a body and a soul capable of receiving salvation or damnation.

1 September 1921

I see that astral journeys, with or without drugs (some of my best have been without) can be exploited more than is supposed.

28 September 1921 [43 Belsize Park Gardens, London]

I met John again in Paris.[19] Previously I had noticed that it was not sexually that I miss him, or suffer from his absence. It is because the old friendship had been violently & irrelevantly ended when the sexual intimacy ceased. The friendship, the common interest is still perfect, loose in the world without satisfaction, without anything to bite on. Then, when I am suddenly reminded of him, the agony comes.

30 September 1921

Back here—such windy, brilliant cold autumn. Cefalu has given me a different self-conscious[ness]. Once it was a blind discomfort, now I know what caused the discomfort, my various fears, I watch & am troubled by them instead.

Examination of the Astral Plane

A list of 'planes of vision.'

I. There is a series of pictures, like living in a coloured film where one sees bogies—real, unimaginable, dull, harmless, bogies.
II. There is a formal plane with water & heraldic things.
III. There is a high, brilliant world very white where are the archetypal shapes.
IV. There is a heightened image of the world we know—woods more brilliant, cliffs higher, darker seas.
V. There are place memories exceedingly distinct.
VI. There are places no imagination can picture or retain, celestial fields, people no people were ever like, echoed in literature in Fiona Macleod & [William] Morris, in ballads.[20] Also the Good Friday *Parzival* music.

[19] As they passed through Paris after their stay at Cefalu Butts and Maitland "looked like two ghosts and were hardly recognisable." Nina Hamnett, *Laughing Torso,* 177.

[20] Fiona Macleod, born William Sharp (1855–1905), British supernatural writer. Wrote under the name of Fiona Macleod. Worked with Bligh Bond.

I should prefer *III*.—it's pure & profound but I long for VI. I have been there two or three times.

2 October 1921

Nature has a counterpart, a representation of every interior mood & obscure perception of man.

8 October 1921

I find writing difficult but I think I can work it back. Ideas, & I'm racing to catch up the time—I can notice things happening in several different ways, e.g. a human way of stating them & 'abstract' ideas or concepts of the events. By abstract, not in human terms.

10 October 1921

For weeks Cecil & I have played at being forlorn children, or a prince & princess on a long phantasy of living in the fairy world & the place-on-the-edge of the star world, back through the blind world into the fairy world again.

We did this to gild our position as a worn-down hard-up man & woman with the crowd against us, & private griefs & sickness past description to go with us all the time. One description is as good as the other. There is no reason why the pill should not change places with the gilt.

Still the child talk & all that can be given a rest. I must cultivate realistic attractions—but I'm a pale brown ghost fretting alongside my spectral Jimmy [Rodker], occasionally aware of my solid 'vraies vérités' & my pitiful little facts.

I will go through MSS & send to papers.

12 October 1921

Ideas for the "Magical Experiment." . . . Story about BVM.[21]

19 October 1921

It is quite clear—I fell in love—am still in love with another man, but never out of love with Jimmy—I am getting sentimental about him. It is intolerable want of sense. I am lonely.

[21] Butts's story "The Magical Experiment" was never published. "BVM" refers to Blessed Virgin Mary, in Butts's story "Madonna of the Magnificat" (1923).

12 November 1921

Never blame people. It produces a reaction in them—they look up your misdeeds—everything gets out of proportion.

16 November 1921

Here is a definite piece of analysis at last.

Once I believed that human ideas or rights were the ultimate—if not the thing-in-itself—enough for us to go on with. I had standards, I knew the world did not 'live up' to them, but imagined that it wished to & paid them more than lip service. I did not know the bases of human nature nor of what lies outside human nature yet affects it.

I believed I had faith.

John taught me that all action was equally indifferent—& specifically that human effort was valueless. While I was with him I resisted this. Now I am alone again I feel my long contact with his mind, as though it'd been indelibly dipped. My standards are gone (I want to find a new, simple perfect one or part of me does. It affects even my writing—why arrange that phrase).

I am so worked upon by this that I can't write, for everything I say, for each word there is a contradiction. It is possible that nothing will ever happen again. I am obsessed by the 'pairs of opposites.'

I have one thing—this daimon is solid as Brancusi—but he acts for my personal affairs—if I could adapt him to writing—I can try that—I do not want, I do not mean—to be side-tracked into mysticism. I'd sooner be a Villon than [an] Æ [George Russell].[22]

It takes a solid head to stand—Cefalu realities were like flakes of onion in a huge soup of phrase-making. I shall go out & lick up the Chauve-Souris like chocolates.[23]

21 November 1921

I am obsessed by antitheses so that I can't choose, but what a patched, stony unique life I am living, weighted with beauty. The phrase "weighted

[22] Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), Rumanian sculptor, particularly famous for his aerodynamic bird forms. Francois Villon (1431–63), French lyrical poet. George William Russell "Æ" (1867–1935), Irish poet, dramatist, painter, and journalist. Fellow student with Yeats at the Metropolitan School of Art. Poet and painter of mystical landscapes, incidents, and figures owing much to his involvement in Theosophy.

[23] Perhaps a performance of Strauss's "Die Fledermaus."

with beauty" & the like is a trap to me—impressionism in words. The best writing is not like that—yet it is an attempt to say something that cannot easily be said.

I see that sentiment will come into fashion again.

The Greeks were always shewing men up against the beautiful interesting potencies that acknowledged no human values. Sin of νβρισ [hubris] invented to explain.[24] Later they became definitely spiteful. To-day Dunsany, Anatole France.[25] Dunsany makes them frightful & France absurd or exquisitely sane. When I tried to make the Magnificat story ["Madonna of the Magnificat"] good, I was paralysed when I found my ideas were not original to myself.

25 November 1921

It is fundamental for the artist to notice the change in the event which has happened & become part of its sequence, how it takes on at once [an] ideal quality & nothing is too good to say about it. *The Occult Review* is as milky a slosh as ever I read, but now it is read, & the mind plays with its attitude, as one of the innumerable possible attitudes clearly given out.

30 November 1921

Illuminations

Why am I so moved by Brancusi's egg & bird forms? Because they are forms of quintessential eggness & birdness, & *what that is* is something which is a subject for a god's speculation. The sculptor's truth to be retranslated *into itself* for the writer's material. A word is not the sculptor's mass or plane—a word is no more than a grain in the stone.

The quintessential shape of each event must be held faster than any detail however witty. How long have I known that to discover each time what it *means*? Sit on the stone of that shape & see a long way down the people, weather, perspectives, passions & cut them fine & small—or large & loose—it will not matter. Story-telling cannot—does not—need not—abstract like sculpture? . . . The shape of the annunciation story as I see it would be a long thin diamond balanced on its point.

[24] For hubris, see Glossary.

[25] Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, 18th Baron (Lord) of Dunsany (1878–1957), Irish writer and editor of ghost stories.

5 December 1921

This sort of shape properly made.

Like a holy ghost descending of course. No wonder. A true shape i.e. a cross shape. Nothing whatever to do with Brancusi's bird.

What the Victorians thought of as ideas—we see as shapes—it is better because a number of words loose a thing better than a single shape.

Note 'shape' in writing does not quite mean sculptural in shape—the line drawn round the story—it is something conveyed in the texture of language.

Note, the long triangle did not come down, it came up, pushed up & balanced quivering. It was there of course all the time. Not the idea but the being is to be conveyed.

5 December 1921

Lecture on China.[26] In love with Bertrand Russell—lech, toute la lyre.[27] As I have always been. Am now. Ever shall be. I shall never be so much as introduced. Couldn't stand those circles—or they me. A good lecture—no frills, a hard sequence.

8 December 1921

Aleister [Crowley] a 'Dostoevsky' character trying everything to find out if there is a 'God' or not. Cecil also.

[26] A series of lectures which formed the basis of *China* (1922) by the British philosopher, mathematician, and pacifist Bertrand Arthur William Russell (1872–1970).

[27] Butts may be thinking of Théodore de Banville's poem "Toute la Lyre" (1888).

1922

11 January 1922 [43 Belsize Park Gardens]

Life is running on a good sequence. I must try & get clear about Aleister Crowley.

I am afraid of him 'somewhere.' There is a point of fear in my mind.

I know that 'a new word' is wanted, & went to explore his, because I thought that a new word might be made by man exploring the world not visible to his senses—where he might find:

(i) another order of beings
(ii) undeveloped powers in himself
(iii) both.

My belief was & is (iii).

But I saw at Cefalu the familiar features of religion come again. And obscenity. And something exceedingly bad (not obscene), & something powerful.

"Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law."[1] That is all right. But people are to be made aware of this by fear, coercion, bribery etc, a religious movement re-enacted. The founder is to be Crowley & his gulled, doped women. I don't doubt most new religions had some such start, but I feel that even Mahomet was better.

10 February 1922

I am in disgust with professional mysticism.

18 February 1922

One of my most amusing evidences was the astral variations in sleep of places I know well. Always these versions have been *incredibly* interesting—with a quality I cannot evoke at will. Some I visit & revisit & can sometimes remember the quality of the contact. Such are the versions of Poole Harbour & certain parts of London.[2]

[1] Crowley's motto, after St Augustine, see 19 November 1917.

[2] See Butts's stories "Mappa Mundi," "Brightness Falls," "Green," and 1927 note 7.

12 March 1922 [S. Egliston cottage, Dorset]

On Badbury Rings.[3] There was this sequence. We [Butts, her brother, Tony, Maitland, and Gladys Hynes] went up the hill to them. . . . & on the grass outside the wood . . . there was a blood-winged butterfly—Painted Lady—on the March grass.[4] It flew away round us. Gladys saw a fox. I saw a beetle. There was the quiet. I lay stretched out on the ground & understood that the Rings' signature is written in the quiet. Its quiet is made audible by the sound in the grove. I saw the fir-treetops on their red shafts & the bunches of needles that pass sideways. They have the sensual, distinct beauty of Japanese of Chinese silk-paintings.

Now this place is enchanted—technically—concretely—if there is such a thing—by reputation, by experience, by tradition. I have felt them—but have never seen anything but trees & grass & wind & their accompaniments. I have no sign I can tell. Obliquely I retold what I had seen in *Ashe* but the communication & translation are oblique. They have affected my mind & because my mind is that sort of mind—they have made an aesthetic restatement.

19 March 1922 [43 Belsize Park Gardens, London]

I can do automatic 'drawing' in my room. Here I have the electric blue quicksilver ball. The same old patterns, bad pentagrams, triangles, broken designs & thing like a phallos. In this writing the usual order is reversed. One writes consciously—the effort is to write, not to stop writing. Automatically, one writes without effort, stops one's point by will & goes on once the attention wanders.

What 'stratum' of my mind is touched? I 'wanted' a script—sensational for preference. Deep, contemplative states I do not find useful, a lazy inattention works best. Is there a separate state to which these things belong, an occult order by itself in which Crowley deals? I mean is daimon-raising & casual automatic writing all part of one cheese—so that the whole preoccupation would always be quickened by any part?

[3] The Iron Age earthworks near Salterns, Dorset. The inspiration and part setting for Butts's novel *Ashe of Rings* (1925). See Introduction and Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 113–4.

[4] Gladys Hynes (1888–1958), British sculptor and painter. Close friend of Mary Butts, she rented a room from her at 43 Belsize Park Gardens. At this time Goldring is in love with her.

In late March/early April Butts and Maitland travel to Paris and then on to Germany where they stay for two months at the Hotel Titisee, Titisee bei Freiburg, Baden, in the Schwarzwald.

9 April 1922

There are places that are signatures. I do not mean where one has lived continually or where important affairs have happened, but a place felt to be significant, & passionately & irrationally cherished. There is the S. Eglis-ton cottage & the Rue de l'Université [Paris]—that one is mutual. And there is this.[5]

18 April 1922

The psychologist says: two exceptionally suitable natures in unhappy circumstances met & had the realism to stick to one another. One can only observe the sequence arising out of that. People of strong character usually do what they want—externalise their reveries.

What do I want to imply? That the psychologist's pattern for behaviour is only good for phenomenal existence—some things were 'arranged beforehand.' Some things are part of a huge significant design—another back-door for God. If some things, why not all? (Not all.) Magic things are the designed things then? Sometimes. The magic quality is in an existence where there may be design. 'Significant' design then like Clive Bell's form [in *Since Cézanne* (1922)]. There is a moment when existence has another quality. Sometimes then we see structures, sometimes there is a new perception that can be co-related, sometimes a phantasy which can be related to nothing, & is terrifying or enchanting. The psychologists must name that quality & account for it.

I think I can do nothing but note the appearance of that quality & the times when, by daimon-evocation, I arrive at truth. But then Coué says—you only autosuggest your distracted self into your wisest self, & naturally the results are good.[6]

[5] See note for 3 September 1920.

[6] Emile Coué (1857–1926), French pharmacist who developed the theory of health through autosuggestion and is now remembered for his mantra "Every day in every way I'm getting better and better."

24 April 1922

I have seen pine trees, loved them & their properties & their God since I was a child. They were material for my secret reveries, my first technical magical practice. They are on Badbury Rings. We came, by accident, to live among them here.

1 May 1922

I think I am at the beginning of more serious writing than any I have done.

3 May 1922

Cecil's formula: This matter of an 'occult' world, should be examined from another basis. The Catholic idea is that man is a spirit entirely contained in a body that is 'animal' & entirely vile. Your transcendentalist is inclined to say that even his body is spirit. Now you have the psycho-analysts against you, whose methods you use, half of whose conclusions you really accept. You should accept all the facts, start from man's nature as an animal & see where you get. Accept the psycho-analysts below the human vanity, explain all you can by the explanation that at least explains. The most you need is courage. It is possible that way that you may discover what you are looking for. You are not likely to do it by a priori suppositions.

I will refocus the whole enquiry from this.

Another variation of the pine tree group. *My* scent is Chypre de Coty. It transported me before I knew that it was made from moss "gathered at certain times in the woods." The moss is arm deep in these woods, feather-moss and club moss. I have a little Chypre with me. Would it be appropriate to make a libation?

My life is in my hair. It *is* my chief beauty.[7]

6 May 1922

I went for a walk yesterday evening in the rain in the woods where before I got fever in the snow. They frightened me. I could hardly turn & go back the way I came. I had to do it on "mortals who would follow me" from [Milton's] *Comus*. A bell broke up the dripping quiet. There was a dead

[7] For more information about the reaction to Butts's striking red hair see Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 116.

branch on a tree that frightened me. I felt at the end that disgust of the occult that followed my automatic writings—a stale, bad sensation. I have cleansed myself with *Comus* & proper occupations. Now I can note it.

It is all one pattern. There is our sexual life. It is better than any I have known. We have infinite pleasure from it.

12 May 1922

To-day I found the violet, the final element of the imagination, on a bank by the lake.

(To complete what seems a part of the group, though they have no reference to the pine trees there are three ballads. "The Two Ravens," english version and scotch ["The Twa Corbies"]. "Lulley Lulley" and "Tam Lyn" that might have been written for the occasion.)

Their words cause in me a great emotion.

17 May 1922

The spring has settled in & we have found sheets of violets in the woods. I picked a bunch to-day for him to wear. We are talking of going back to France for a month.

13 June 1922

We have been in Paris now for three weeks.

Cecil had fever & took an overdose of veronal. I thought it might be suicide. It was not & he is peacefully recovering, but it was a frightful pain & shock to me & I did not behave so wisely as I might. He is not quite normal yet & I (near my period) am sad & wild & a streak of me hardly responsible. The accident seems to have set free in Cecil a strange energy. I have perpetually to speak to the daimon, & reaffirm my will. "*Holy & cold I clipped the wings/ of all sublunary things*" [Blake, "For the Sexes"].

21 June 1922 [43 Belsize Park Gardens, London]

Three days alone. Finish:

(i) In the Street
(ii) An analysis
(iii) a story - perhaps more Charles? or AC?[8]

[8] (i) "In the Street" (1923); (ii) "Brightness Falls" (1932); (iii) "In Bayswater" (1923).

2 July 1922 [S. Egliston, Dorset]

In the cottage at the top of the sacred wood under Tyneham Cap with the wind blowing & the sea rising & no one there.[9]

There was a book [MS of Goldring's] *Nobody Knows* (1923). I was afraid of the wind & the past; the salt & the grass & the air were my blood & the wood my imagination.

In August 1922 Butts, Maitland, and [Gladys' sister] Sheelah Hynes travel to Germany where they "drink Tokay at a shilling a bottle, & tramp all day & get hot but never dirty & in the intervals [Butts] read[s] Jung's Psychology of the Unconscious *(1916)."*[10] *They travel to the ski resort at Sankt Anton, Austria, where Peter Morris & Douglas Goldring* join them. By early October Butts is back in London to positive reviews of her story "Speed the Plough," included in* Georgian Stories 1922.[11] *While she does not mention it in her diary, Butts has tea with Virginia Woolf on the*

[9] Butts describes the setting of the cottage in more detail. It explains her later remark that Eliot takes *her* titles:

> I wonder if you would—or if you wouldn't—say that towns may be very bad places, but that even the country should be decently modified. This isn't. It's my native place & I worship it, but its isolation affects most people's nerves. . . . it is ten miles from a station, and that station is a wayside halt outside a tiny medieval town—Corfe Castle. Then a flinty lane turns off—the hills are green sheep-walks we call 'downs' with barrows on them and neolithic grass-forts. . . . There is no road to us from the top of Kimmeridge hill, but two miles of turf & a track down to the place where a wood shaped like a narrow fan runs up from the sea. That's called the Sacred Wood. Most people are afraid of it & say it is full of ghosts, & it is, if there are such things, I should worry. . . . I walk all day & at night, when the Sacred Wood dances, I dance too. And all the while, the wild life presses in.

Butts to Wescott, undated [July 1923], Wescott papers. For its inspiration of the opening of *Armed with Madness,* see Introduction.

[10] Butts to Douglas Goldring, undated [August 1922], in Goldring, *The Nineteen Twenties,* 211–2. Sheelah Hynes (1901–1992/3), British teacher of English.

[11] Alongside stories by Lawrence, Mansfield, Forster, Violet Hunt, May Sinclair, Algernon Blackwood, Somerset Maugham, and others. "Speed the Plough" was described as "one of the best stories in this volume, possibly the best of all." "Georgian Stories," *Times Literary Supplement* (6 July 1922), 440. See Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 111.

29 October, despite the latter's rejection of Ashe of Rings*—an "indecent book about the Greeks and the Downs"—for the Hogarth Press.*[12]

11 November 1922

Now this is over, if anything is ever over, I can add a note. We had a great holiday in Germany & quarrelled on the question of drugs when we returned here—I thought he would not stop. We have quarrelled, shot off at different angles, reapproached & settled down again. I was afraid he had 'taken to' dope instead of amusing himself with it. He shewed me again his will to lead the life we imagined together.

I am not absolutely at ease but have checked impatience & too great idealism.

Crowley has had no success in London [where he is promoting his *Diary of a Drug Fiend* (1922)].[13] I dislike this book & all that it is about. Everything but the daimon.

Signature—that I should be on the jury of the Gunner Moir case.[14]

[12] See Virginia Woolf diary entry, 29 October 1922, in *The Diary of Virginia Woolf. Volume II: 1920–1924,* ed. Anne Olivier Bell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 209. Woolf to Katherine Arnold-Foster, 29 October 1932, in *The Question of Things Happening: The Letters of Virginia Woolf.* Vol II: 1912–1922, ed. Nigel Nicolson (London: Hogarth, 1976), 576.

[13] Butts, who is lampooned in Crowley's book, gives an anonymous account of her stay in Cefalu in "Complete Exposure of 'Drug Fiend' Author," *The Sunday Express* (26 November 1922), 7. The adverse publicity given to the book leads to its banning. See Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 122–3.

[14] In December Butts is on the jury of an assault case involving a homosexual. Her open-mindedness about homosexuality is cited in the newspaper. See "Unpleasant Court Cases, Facts of Life, Plea for Frank & Adequate Knowledge," *Pall Mall Gazette* (20 December 1922), 5 and Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 123–4.

1923

6 February 1923 [London]

The lunch with E. S. P. Haynes [near Lincoln's Inn Fields].[1]

The Museum & the King who has the face of my daimon.

John, & the sense of power.

The poem, [Pound's] "The White Stag": "I had seen them 'mid the clouds on the heather."

The part of London round the Museum.

The thing "like a wire drawn taut," everywhere, that Cecil noticed.

All these were part of one thing, the condition of music.

This was not easy to write down.[2]

In a letter to her lawyer Tom Swan shortly before her death Butts claims that her journal of February 1923–November 1924 was stolen. This is particularly disappointing as it would have documented her response to her first book-length publication, Speed the Plough and Other Stories *(Chapman & Hall) in the spring of 1923. A particularly fulsome review appears in* The Dial *by the American writer Glenway Wescott, whom Butts meets that year, which she appears to have spent in England.*[3] *Her birthplace, Salterns, is sold and its contents auctioned on the 27–28 June. In early July she writes to a friend that she is spending the month in S. Egliston, Dorset.*[4] *Butts completes "Backwards From Babylon," an unpublished novel in collaboration with Cecil Maitland, on the 28 August.*[5] *In November she at-*

[1] Edmund Sidney Pollack Haynes (1877–1949), solicitor, writer, wit, and bonviveur. Had been friend of Leslie Stephens, Virginia Woolf's father. Also Crowley's and H. G. Wells's solicitor.

[2] This experience inspires Butts's "Brightness Falls." In this story unfolding around Lincoln's Inn Fields (previsioning the "strange region" Butts reads about in Metcalfe's "Bad Lands"—see 1927 note 7), Butts creates a fictional repudiation of Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (trans. 1914).

[3] Wescott, "The First Book of Mary Butts," *The Dial,* 75 (Sept 1923), 282–4. See also Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 129–31.

[4] See Butts to Jane Heap, 6 July 1923, *Little Review* papers, Golda Meir Library.

[5] "Backwards from Babylon" is set in the 1920s: several London flatmates conjure up (as in Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* or Swift's *Gulliver's Travels.* Book 3) a number of figures from history. Dramatic and comic consequences ensue amidst a serious discussion of the relationship between history and "progress." It is currently being edited by Camilla Bagg and Nathalie Blondel.

tends Goldring's party at 7 St James Terrace before setting off with Maitland for the continent. "What a party! What drink! What company! It will become a classic example . . . If you feel you could, would you send us an introduction to Norman Douglas? . . . we are likely to be in Florence some time. Poste Restante [Pension Balestra] there, till we have a settled address." First stop Paris where Ford pays Butts £4 for a 3,000-odd word story ("Deosil" later "Widdershins") for his transatlantic review. *Ford "was in magnificent fettle, but I always behave stupidly with him & fear the impression that I left was none of the best. Paris was a dream—we didn't go to bed for a week, & spent all our money on such binges! The last thing I remember was dancing solely supporting myself by the lobes of Cedric Morris' ears."*[6] *Before travelling to Florence, Butts and Maitland visit Ezra Pound in Rapallo.*

[6] Butts to Goldring, undated [November 1923], in Goldring, *The Nineteen-Twenties,* 212–3. Cedric Morris (1889–1982), British painter, considered to be one of the best twentieth-century painters of flowers and garden produce as well as birds, animals landscapes, and portraits. See c. 3 July 1928. His 1924 portrait of Mary Butts is reproduced in Richard Morphet, *Cedric Morris* (Uxbridge, Hillingden Press for the Tate Gallery, 1984) 43. Together with his long-term companion the painter Arthur Lett-Haines, he founded the East Anglian School of painting in 1937.

1924

Little information exists about Butts's movements and thoughts until November 1924, when she begins the next volume of her journal. She and Maitland stay in Florence until the spring when they go to Paris, probably staying at the Hôtel Foyot in the Latin Quarter near Sylvia Beach's bookshop, Shakespeare & Co.[1] *Also staying there are H.D. and Bryher.*[2] *In May William Carlos Williams meets Butts at a small drinks party for expatriate writers in Paris.*[3] *Butts has her portrait painted by Cedric Morris. It is a sociable time, as Butts declares to Wescott:*

[1] Sylvia Beach (1887–1962), American bookseller and publisher, famous for her Paris bookshop and lending library for writers called Shakespeare & Co and for publishing Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). We are now much closer to her hope that "one day . . . there will be a complete edition of the work of Mary Butts." Beach, *Shakespeare & Company* (New York, Plantin: 1987), 130.

[2] Winifred Ellermann "Bryher" (1894–1983), British heiress, writer, owner of *Close-Up, Life and Letters To-Day,* and Brendin Publishing Co. Briefly married to Robert McAlmon and later to Kenneth MacPherson, the predominant relationship in her life is that with H.D. Publishes work by Butts.

[3] Dr William Carlos Williams (1883–1963), American pediatrician and objectivist poet. Co-edited *Contact* magazine with Robert McAlmon in America.

I've another book ready, mostly continuation of "In Bayswater," & lots of poems.[4]

I've been in Paris a lot, observing & comparing the "American Scene." I don't think I'll ever get it clear. They seem to hate us without a cause & love us for what we aren't, & when they're good, they're so good, & when they aren't—my God!

Mixed impressions—H.D., Bob Macalmond [sic—McAlmon], Harold Stearns, Man Ray, Berenice [Abbott]. These all pretty good, & cheers for Jane Heap anyhow. You would laugh to see the American & English crowds examining each other.

We've had no luck with "Backwards from Babylon." Harold Stearns, who is agent for some big publisher, read it over here, & swore he'd make him take it, but so far we've heard nothing.[5]

By the end of October Butts is staying at 7 St. James Terrace, London. She spends the evening of the 6 November at a party with Evelyn Waugh.[6] *By late November she is back in Paris.*

[late] November 1924

For a novel derived fom the quartier [latin].

End of 19th century idealism. The last refuge of amenity & freedom, *freedom* from inhibition. USA result. The growth—the laboratory where a new idea of human life & relationship is being tried out. A scientific kind of poetry. Waste products. It would have to be rather like a ballet. Rather

[4] The new book was "Charles," never published.

[5] Butts to Wescott, Hôtel Foyot, Paris VI, undated [1924], Wescott papers. Robert McAlmon (1895–1966), American writer and publisher. Briefly married to Bryher. Owner of Contact Press, which publishes *Ashe of Rings* and "Friendship's Garland." As Butts had realised the previous year: "All English publishers are hopeless—America is its [*Ashe of Rings'*] only chance of ever appearing," Butts to Jane Heap, 6 July 1923, Little Review Papers, Golda Meir Library. Its publication by McAlmon leads to Boni's publication of *Ashe of Rings* in 1926. Harold Stearns (1891/2–1943), American writer, editor, journalist in Paris for *Paris Herald* and *Town and Country.* Also Paris literary agent for Horace Liveright. Man Ray (born Emmanuel Rudnitsky) (1890–1976), American artist, photographer, and filmmaker. Famous for his innovative Rayographs. He photographs Butts in 1927. Jane Heap (1887–1964), American journalist, editor, painter, co-editor with Margaret Anderson of *The Little Review.*

[6] Evelyn Arthur St John Waugh (1902–66), British writer. See *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh,* ed. Michael Davie (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 185.

like [André Salmon's] *La Négresse du Sacré Coeur* [5th ed. (1920)]? The walk from Foyot's [hotel] through the Luxembourg [Gardens] to the Dôme [café], a kind of string. The colours are violet & gold. Also a heavy wind full of rain. A thunderstorm—making a yellow comb of a flooded street.

The state of mind when one could write anything, when everything is worthy of notice, & one can choose nothing to put down, or get as far as conceiving one thing separate from another. A pleasant state, & a principal excuse for idleness. (Last sentence unconscious paraphrase of James [I]'s *Daemonologie*) A day possibly to be all pleasant. A little work might be done—but one is diverted by the pleasures of friendship, a little study & work. Also beginning to feel well again.

[Jules Romain's] *Knock* [(1923)]. Théâtre du Champs Elysées.
A comedy of humours—Ben Jonson—nothing like it since.

[Butts visits Notre Dame de Chartres.]
Most feminine of Cathedrals. . . . York has something of the same simplicity. . . . Notre Dame de Sous Terre a disappointment. Unimpressive shrine, hideous wall paintings, black vaunted roof the best, a little mean & dull, but approach good enough. One might like to pray there like Huysmans, one cold winter morning. . . . The best of it when one stood by the choir railings, back to the altar, & at the windows of the west end. Into that blue a million souls of priests have looked & lost themselves in something like Plato's Diotima's contemplation [from *Symposium*].[7]

[Extracts from unpublished poems written while Butts and Maitland's relationship is disintegrating]:

"Little Song:"[8]
Si! Ah! Si!
Paris sighing with light pain
The Foyot—The thin rain—

[7] Butts will draw on this visit (and a subsequent one) for her review of Henry Adams' *Mont-Saint-Michel & Chartres,* "Chartres—The Symbol," *Time & Tide,* 17, 24 (13 June 1936), 856. See Plato's *Symposium,* 201b–211b.

[8] The line "What'll I do" comes from the song of that title by Irving Berlin (1924). Butts incorporates it into her American character Dudley Carston's thought-process in *Armed with Madness*, in *The Taverner Novels,* 37.

What'll I do?
What'll I do?

"Hiawatha!" [verse 6 reads]:
Always looking for Plato's image
In the persons of young men.
I am under nature's law:
Necessity:
And all that:
I don't complain, but am invariably surprised.

"Victorian"
We have been quarrelling now six months,
In love, some years
Drifting about the rainy quays
Remembering—
It had been as inevitable to love,
Remembering—
Our admirable, bloody pride.
Remembering—
That we could never forget.
Accompanied
By the smart terrier commonsense
That takes old lovers on new walks alone.

Butts is working on a collection of stories for the American publisher Charles Boni. Unfortunately it does not appear.

"Charles"; "Deosil," "The House," "West of the Moon," "Lettres Imaginaires," "Later Life of Theseus, King of Athens," "Change."[9]

[Writes out] "Song to Keep People out of Dorset."[10]
To be sung in a car when crossing that county . . .

[9] "The House" was already completed by November 1923, see Butts to Goldring, undated, Rapallo [Nov–Dec 1923], in Goldring, *The Nineteen-Twenties,* 213. All the stories included in Several Occasions (1932) except "Charles" and "West of the Moon" (never published) and "Change" (never anthologised.)

[10] Recited by Patrick Wright in a British television programme on Dorset in *Pevsner's England* (BBC2, 1999), and republished several times under the name "Corfe,"

Dynasty to Akhnaton [written out].
Breasted's *History of Egypt* [(1905).][11]
Religion & Thought in Ancient Egypt.
Titles: "Beautiful-is-the-being-of-Ra."
Of the Aton: "Master of that which is ordained."
Origin of fate. The chance which gives life.
Of Akhnaton—the-unique-one-of-Ra-whose-beauties-Aton-has created. The beautiful child of the Aton.
His artistic movement a return, not to archaic stylisation, but archaic naturalisation. Much better done.

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most recently in the *Anthology of Twentieth-Century British and Irish Poetry,* ed. Keith Tuma (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 152. Its opening line "God keep the hollow land from all wrong" owes much to William Morris's *The Hollow Land: A Tale* (1856) where "Chapter 1. Struggling in the World" begins: "Do you know where it is the Hollow Land? I have been looking for it now so long, trying to find it again, the Hollow Land; for there I saw my love first." *The Collected Works of William Morris* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1992), 254. See Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 459 note 142 and Patrick Wright, *The Village That Died for England: The Strange Story of Tyneham* (London: Vintage, 1996), 84–8.

[11] James Henry Breasted (1865–1935), American Orientalist, archaeologist, and historian. Headed the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute's first archaeological survey of Egypt and western Asia from 1919 to 1920.

1925

By January 1925 Butts and Maitland are back in London, living with Douglas Goldring in his house at 7 St James Terrace. In addition to preparing the MS of "Charles" to send it to Ford, Butts is revising Ashe of Rings.[1] *This novel (begun in 1916) is finally to be published in 1925 by the American writer Robert McAlmon's recently founded Contact Editions, which is run from the Hôtel Foyot, Paris.*[2]

[1] Reference to Ford's possible publication of "Charles" is not explained. By this time *the transatlantic review* has foundered.

[2] See McAlmon to Bryher, undated [spring 1924], Bryher papers.

[January 1925]

Conclusion of *Ashe*—notes.

After Judy's exit, tone down. The book's finish should be more sober.

Peter Whiffle [(1922)] by Carl van Vechten.[3]

In the last part of *Peter* he is on the old game of the black occult. Why does that so continually turn up? Plenty in Egypt, Greece, Rome etc. Mediaeval, Renaissance, *all* the periods. The same *flavour* about different acts, speculations, experiments, arts. Compare Machen & Waite's summary of De Bataille's *Le Diable au XIXieme Siècle.* Lévi, Wilde, my own automatic writings etc (not that they were much use, but the staleness they reduced me to!) Far more spontaneous the *state* Machen, for example, will evoke immediately, along with places, the sight of some flowers, snakes, scarlet on white, Beardsley, whom I dislike, less in Goya, a 'purer' painter whom I love, & some folklore, usually Keltic. Keltic art alive with it, but somehow made innocent. 'Rather queer' or 'rather beastly' is the reaction of normal moods.

The thing is in nature but one has an attitude to it that one has nothing else that is 'beastly'—gangrene cruelty etc.

One writes stupidly about it & it's 'all right' in Goya anyhow. I suppose it is because it is a theory that has not been analysed, even explored at all. There is no light to turn on it except one hard to keep on tap, a holiness in the soul. In fact a set of phenomena not externally documented, in the scientific sense.

I have written all this several times before. I have never got past it—I only get the experience, the pleasure, the overwhelming curiosity again. I can't write that sort of stuff anyhow. *Ashe* was the nearest & I pared that & cut it & intellectualised the rest.

If I could take hold of life more firmly, if I could take life more easily, I might get through. All this because Cecil does not care much for me, & is a disappointing man; because I am afraid of him, because I am unjust to him, because I love him, most of all because he has humbled my pride, because he is dear & inconceivably stupid & so strong for his own ends, because I have put my life into him & need him. If I were loved, I might get through. Any love that was love & that would do its share. Then I

[3] Carl van Vechten (1880–1964), American writer and photographer. Butts meets him on several occasions.

could punish Cecil & love him secretly, by myself, & not tell him & make him want me & not have me.

Or, if he came to me & said that he was sorry, that he understood, infinitely sorry. Then the pain would stop.

He will never do that because he does not understand & does not understand because he does not love, & does not love because he admires himself & is very willing to make me a bloody sacrifice on the altar of that admiration.

Note: compare again:
"the glittering sparrow-hawk" etc.[4]
this room.
the Sitwells' light & tone obsession.[5]
the same obsession in *Ashe*. Is this the way of an advance in perception. Certain conversations of [J. N. W.] Sullivan's on Einstein's mathematics remind me of the same equality.[6] The continuum.

Re-arrangements of A.H.[7]

While staying at Goldring's house Butts & Maitland write a number of lyrics/poems in January/February 1925 entitled "House Rhymes." No IV, "Love" includes the lines:

The Douglas Scheme—this we insist on
'S a monument of human wisdom.

. . .

[4] Butts may be misremembering this and thinking of the "golden sparrow-hawk" in Tennyson's poem "The Marriage of Geraint."

[5] Edith Louisa Sitwell (1887–1964), British poet and critic. Sir Francis Osbert Sacheverell Sitwell (1892–1969), novelist, critic, and poet. Sacheverell Sitwell (1897–1988), poet, art historian, and biographer. Both brothers are close friends of Gabriel Atkin.

[6] John William Navin Sullivan (1886–1937), British mathematician. Butts may have met him when they were both in Paris in early 1921. Albert Einstein (1879–1955), naturalised Swiss physicist. Most famous for his Special Theory of Relativity (1905) and his General Theory of Relativity (1916).

[7] "AH" [Agnes Helen] is "Unborn Gods" (now "Dangerous"), completed by June 1916 before the journal begins. See Introduction.

Within these walls erotic life
Is mother of erratic strife.

Douglas has several mistresses
And more than several witnesses.

Cecil has two whom he neglects,
Mary has none & so objects.

We mingle discontent, possession,
with singularly small discretion.

Each nourishes his simple hopes
Controlled by Doctor Marie Stopes.[8]

The Artist & Psycho-analysis. Roger Fry.

There is an obvious criticism. He says good art—the artist's work—is not to express unfulfilled desire, but to make a pattern, a logical inevitable sequence, without reference to money or popularity, that he knows he must make or spoil his work. (The question of the artist's conscience comes in here.) But in his *choice* of subject, not its treatment, the artist may well be influenced by his suppressed wishes by the nonfulfilments of his life, by his disappointments. Yeats has theory of this in *Per Amica*.

For example Lord Steyne—Thackeray was a snob, adored even the wicked aristocracy, was not one by family. Lord Steyne is a perfect sequence, but Thackeray might never have written about him [in *Vanity Fair*] if he had not had to work to get on social terms with him.

Note. Two themes. Tabu—life inside & outside a person's tabu, the consequence of breaking it, the ritual of getting back.[9] A triple shifting of feeling. In two people one sort of excess in one making a reaction in the

[8] In 1920 Major C. H. Douglas proposed Social Credit or National Dividend as a remedy for unemployment. Variations on the idea were later advocated by various economists including John Maynard Keynes. Marie Stopes (1880–1958), British birth control pioneer and campaigner. Published hugely successful *Married Life* (1918) and opened the first birth control clinic in 1921.

[9] For tabu, see Glossary.

other, strain, tightness everywhere. Then the release of going back to the other's way, seeing the beauty of a sudden turn.

Roger said (I paraphrase): Snobbism is one of the greatest of passions. Here is an example of it—Ouspensky patented it.[10] He arranged a place first, threw an atmosphere around it of occultism and sex—two things to exploit, but he wanted a third emotion to get them across. Snobbism did it, by that he induced women of beauty & wealth to clean the drains & live on refuse at the price of sixteen guineas a week.

Stories: The dinner at the Lunns' flat, the half memory of the scene before with Brian Lunn when Cecil shot himself & he wouldn't. Might be a 'tabu' story—you can take another woman's man, but not let another man use a gun etc. ["The Dinner Party"].[11]

As a 'psychic' story through 'character's' eyes:
A man describing what happened to two women—wife & friend. On the story I told myself coming over Primrose Hill in the fog ["Brightness Falls"].

MSS
"Charles": 1 in Paris; 2 Tony; 3 Duckworth
"The House": 1 Duckworth; 2 Paris; 3?

[10] Petyr Demianovich Ouspensky (1878–1947), Russian philosopher and student of the Turkish philosopher Georges Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1877?–1949). Butts reads his work, see May 1926. Ouspensky assisted Gurdjieff in establishing his "Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man" near Fontainebleu in 1922. Writers who became disciples of Gurdjieff include Katherine Mansfield, Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap, and Philippe Lavastine.

[11] Brian Lunn (b. 1893), Scottish lawyer, translator, and tour operator. Friend of Philip Heseltine, Tommy Earp, and Cecil Maitland. The incident central to her story "The Dinner Party" is Cecil's suicide attempt in December 1920. It appears that it was a suicide pact between Maitland and Lunn, who later wrote: "On his saying that he [Maitland] had an old revolver of his father's and some cartridges at home, we decided to go there later in the evening and toss up, the loser to do the shooting. . . . Maitland tossed up and lost, but instead of shooting me he put the gun to his own left breast and fired. He staggered back on to the divan and groaned. Then he got up; his waistcoat had a hole about an inch in diameter with sparks. . . . I did not see Maitland until he came out of hospital, when he told me that the doctor had to call the police as there had been shooting, and that they had accepted his explanation that he was fiddling with the old revolver when it went off by accident." Lunn, *Switchback* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1948), 131–2.

"Menesthius": 1 Criterion; 2 Duckworth
"Lettres Imaginaires": 1 Duckworth
"Friendship's Garland"[12]: 1 Tony; 2 Duckworth; 3?

Studies in Dreams [(1921)] ed. Mary Arnold-Forster.[13]
For the 'daimon' & the sequence dreams of an enhanced world.

"Confronted by a similar problem, one writer has advanced the theory that the dramatis personae in such dreams must come from a source extraneous to the dreamer, since there is no reason why surprise should be experienced if our own mind is the source of the dream content. I should like to believe in this theory, & to feel that the Guide & other dream personalities come from a source external to myself; but I cannot feel any conviction of this; it seems more in harmony with all dream experience to conclude . . . that all alike are the invention of the dreamer's mind."

The book is sentimental & quite inconclusive but it takes into consideration 'abnormal' dreaming, the state between waking & sleeping & the 'daimon' question. . . .

Freud would make all this 'dream-work' a symbolism of repressed desires—one could ask "how came that set of ideas to be associated?" the symbolism might be taken a step back & still be there. Perhaps "the passive imagination, *the slave* of associated ideas," may come in here.

"There are as many types of dreams as there are types of organised mental systems . . . dreams are not all alike, but are as manifold in their nature as are the thoughts & imaginations of men."

'PLACES SEEN' continued
Badbury Rings have furnished the chief 'experience' of my life, & in more than one way. It was an artificial sleep, induced by may-flowers in a hot room, after the first time I had ever been there—(I was about 23 or 24 [i.e., 1914–15])—it had happened accidentally, I was tired with motoring—it

[12] "Friendship's Garland" was refused by *The Dial* because of lack of space in 1924, see Alyse Gregory (then managing editor) to Butts, 28 November 1924, Butts papers. It was first published in Robert McAlmon's Contact Collection of Contemporary Writers (Paris: *Contact Editions, Edward Titus,* 1925), 30–40. For reference to Woolf's "cold note of refusal" to contribute to this Collection, see McAlmon to Bryher, undated [Dec 1925], Bryher papers.

[13] Mary Arnold-Forster, British writer. *Studies in Dreams* explains lucid dreaming, i.e., the state when the dreamer is aware of being in the dream state. Influenced by Frederic Myers.

was after dinner, & had closed all the windows because of the moths. It began with an ordinary dream . . . & then what I saw, in the sky above the Rings.

I am rather inclined to think that the face I saw was not Gwen Ingram but Duff Twysden—or, rather, that they both are in a series, & what the series is except that of my sexual attractions, I don't know.[14] But that there is more to it than that (or more in the phrase 'sexual attractions'), I know also.

The first of these dreams that I remember, I think I was six or seven—I remember only an instant of. There was more before & possibly after, but what I recollect is ineffaceable for the pleasure I had. I fell smoothly down a well, under water, & I passed two women with dark hair who pleased me & they let me through into a house at the bottom of the well—that led off from it. It was an adventure & [Carroll's] *Alice* & [Shelley's] "Arethusa" may have had something to do with it—as the last had with an almost forgotten dream of walking on yellow sand through pink weeds under a greeny, bright sea.

"Border state" in dreaming; after fatigue, or with slight fever the drifting images of the still conscious mind suddenly become clear, so 3 dimensional as to appear solid as they drift along. They are inclined, along with their distinctness to be a little abnormal & fanciful.

[February 1925]

Note

Five years ago I first became anxious to make a study of phenomena I felt were not explicable by understood physical laws—I date this *conscious* wish from my first acquaintance with Cecil Maitland, though previously I had studied 'occultism' & found it stirring, but unsatisfactory, a maze of blind alleys. I made various attempts, scrying, automatic writing, read up spiritualism, mystery cults, some neoplatonism & to no conclusion. Crowley, if anything, would have convinced me there was nothing in it. After five years, & lately I have not interested myself so much, realise that I have observed, all my life, a series of phenomena, not all subjective not technically related to the problems but which I now believe to be part of a series though the connection between them is not clear. They

[14] For biographical information on Duff Twysden, see 3 November 1926 and note.

are inconclusive as yet, only observations & the observations may be incorrectly given, but it is impossible to realise them without emotion for I know now that they are the cardinal events of my life.

The stage I have arrived at is to connect these events with each other & to arrive at a theory for them. I have no doubt of them (as I might have doubted if I had seen an 'angel' in the blue glass ball) & my realisation has come slowly like a growth in nature, not an attempt to pry.

Relate these, & describe the relation & the result will be an account of another order of life, an extension, not contradiction of this.

New Book [*Armed with Madness*]

Where we all are, the obvious answer to the futility of Huxley's* last chapter of *Barren Leaves* [(1925)].

Two themes, the Sancgraal story & the windings of the inferiority complex.

A brother & sister seeing the world.

Dorset, Paris, London would do.

Begin with the gray house in Purbeck.

The seven fields walk to meet the American.

The Badbury Rings.

There's enough stuff for ten books—no sex?

[May 1925]

At [G. B. Shaw's] *St Joan* [(1924)]

Strange to go behind [stage]. On the concrete stairs I passed Warwick & Pierre Canchon. I hardly knew Harold [Scott] as the Dauphin.[15] The smell of incense, sitting on a dress-basket, watching them pass. It was two worlds. Back in the middle ages, one would have been as banal as the other.

Waite's Book [*The Holy Grail* (1909)].[16] Received today from BM [British Museum].

Imagine the subject treated with scholarship, omniscient information & personal belief by a sentimental hen reincarnated as a maiden aunt. Dead Waite.

[15] Harold Scott (b.1891), British actor. Ran the Cave of Harmony club in Charlotte Street, London, with the actress Elsa Lanchester who rented a room from Butts at 43 Belsize Park Gardens. See Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 112–3.

[16] Arthur Edward Waite (1857–1942), British occultist and translator.

The only relief of the book is that Waite knows & believes, almost understands his axioms. *Omnia exeunt in mysterium* etc. He knows that there is something unsayable man has to attempt to say. On the other hand, he cannot conceive the answer—no one yet has—that has to be made to *The Golden Bough*. (Whatever is not true, the chief facts of Frazer are true.)

Waite is not always like a hen. He sees how Logres is an image of our desolate hearts.

I am living there, so I know—once the Grail left Cecil & me. [Maitland and Butts separate some time in 1925, perhaps by now.]

FOR THE PLAY[17]

Two young men; one Celtic twilight, another our Cambridge relativist, up to date.

An object is discovered. Might be a Keltic jewel, might be something Aunts think of as the Grail cup. Awful fuss about it. Ceremonially installed in the house.

The state when everything is more than important, significant. When nothing is fortuitous but the machinery of life. Re-say what you have seen then, when the hour is over, & see how you like the look of it.

A dream last night, almost in the series, but an ordinary sensational, incoherent one as well. I couldn't finish this. I fell asleep in pain. That was yesterday. It might as well be seven thousand years, so much I must be in love [with Geoffrey Dunlop].[18]

To make poetry out of these last months, not verses, one has to abstract them; or get out equivalents for a.b.c.

Unpersonalise the thing without reference [to] ecstatic states, prevent 'any sort of meaning' from looking intense. It's no good, I can't do it yet. I'm still drunk on living it. I'll finish the play, for practice & discipline; & that needs formal designing. . . . Oh hell.[19]

[17] Never published, the plot of this play is the basis of Butts's next novel, *Armed with Madness* (1928).

[18] Butts has fallen in love with Geoffrey Dunlop, British actor and translator of German.

[19] "A Lover" (called "Three Tunes" in her first mention of it as an idea) is Butts's story inspired by this relationship with Dunlop. Eventually published in posthumous *Last Stories* (1938). However, all the unsold copies of the book were withdrawn and

Part of the point is this when my judgement of people is questioned. There is always a time when one's friends are good, better than [they] themselves 'see'; are I like to think, more their real selves. I bank on that. They won't be able to keep it up, but I'd sooner remember them for that. It leads one into no worse trouble than this unfriendly, suspicious disillusion that is so popular. It takes some time to find out that they won't keep it up. And then one has to remember that, with luck it will return; & anyhow it is my way.

Geoffrey [Dunlop] said: "How is it, Mary, that so many people are born into the world unfit for sexual experience?" (context!).

Friends Butts sees over the summer and early autumn 1925 include Douglas Goldring, Peter Morris, Rupert Doone, Glenway Wescott, Anton Dolin, Geoffrey Dunlop, and Tommy Earp. In the summer Butts's "War-Fairy-Tale" Ashe of Rings *(dedicated to "J. A. C. M."—James Alexander Cecil Maitland) is published to mixed reviews.*[20] *In September 1925 she sees Paul Robeson perform in Eugene O'Neill's play* The Emperor Jones *(1920). On 14 September she holds a party in his honour but according to Evelyn Waugh, a guest at the party, Robeson "had a fit in his dressingroom & would not come."*[21]

[October 1925]

Something that one is always at the point of being about to say. A form that has the shape of a content which is a new arrangement. From running on into arrangements. Description of the undescribable planes of the three plane stage. All in Einstein, what's going to happen to me isn't known to another, because it hasn't happened yet. Things have happened & have not happened. Are they ever happening? Yes. Do they ever stop happening? Are they ever over?

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destroyed because of libel claims by Dunlop. See correspondence between Robert Herring and Bryher, Bryher holding, and Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 508 note 44.

[20] For the reception of the Contact Edition and the American Boni edition (1926) see Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 147–9.

[21] Evelyn Waugh, diary entry 15 September 1925, in *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh,* 221.

What is the age's formula? Not enough to have history, ideals, criticism. Wit? What is wit? A side-step off, a new angle but without movement. Movement, the continuity up & down, in & out's the thing.

Passion for the ballet. How does the mind move to Einstein's physics? What is the correspondence? That is what art is to sound like, written art. Painting—yes, music, can't say. Ballet, still in its boxes, movements for Persia, Paris. We still say 'they want,' 'he thought.' Have to say? Single, significant moment made more & more intense. (So that what we want can slide in.) Magic, obliquely, magic is the oblique. Because those are the moments. But any moment is the same: & we are tied to verb & statement.

One way to mix all times & periods, a common accompaniment to all the tunes, one side-step to wit, then the accompaniment, the air. That is magic.

How immensely effective is Dr [Richard] Garnett's method, *The Twilight of the Gods* because he knows the trick of telling realistically the mystery tale.[22] That is his trick & his wisdom is his own wisdom & between the trick & the wisdom is made something like stone.

Tricks: Tricks are a side-step, occasionally at the right angle. Tricks are a patina. The patina is the words, the scale of words. There is no reason why anything should not be about something; but something has to be about something. Any theme ought to do, only only certain do. Your données are from the life you have led. Gertrude Stein is on to it.[23]

Why does man want a religion at all? Why Christianity? Can't be all Freud & Co. Sexual sadistic eroticism in Christianity—"execution after torture" as Shaw says [in his preface to *Major Barbara*].

What I should like to see most in the world. Proof that the Sidhe exist, & all the others & the scientist having to square up with it.

Yeats' *Rosa Alchemica* [(1911)] to be rewritten in terms like *Parade* [Cocteau—Satie—Picasso (1917)]. The essence of our business.

Cocteau on . . . Nijinsky in *Spectre de la Rose* [Fokine—Weber—

[22] Richard Garnett (1835–1905), British writer and director of the British Library Reading Room. The title story of *Twilight of the Gods* concerns the fate of the Greek gods after the coming of Christianity ousted them from power.

[23] Gertrude Stein (1874–1946), American writer, famous for her Modernist linguistic experimentation.

Bakst (1911)].[24] The ghost of a rose—"hurls himself out of the window—& comes to earth among the stagehands, who throw water on his face, & rub him down like a boxer. I shall always hear that thunder of applause; I shall always see that young man, smeared with grease-paint, gasping & sweating, pressing his heart with one hand & holding on with the other to the scenery, or else fainting on a chair. Afterwards, having been smacked & douched & shaken" etc.[25]

Rupert [Doone] said:

About my hair: "comb it on one side like that over your forehead, Mary, so that it looks as if God had drawn his finger across it."[26]

In late October/early November Butts goes to Paris.

Do a story on Scylla & Charybdis—
Contrast in temperaments, Russian, English. Also a yarn.[27]

In November 1925 Butts travels south to Villefranche, the "small settlement somewhere between Cannes, Nice & Monte Carlo, the Three Towns of the Blue Coast . . . there since the curtain was rung up on the mediterranean scene."[28] *In Villefranche she sees Eugene MacCown, Rupert Doone, Jean Cocteau, Georges Auric, Glenway Wescott, Monroe Wheeler, Murray Goodwin, Roy Martin, and Paul Robeson. Butts stays with most of these friends at the Hotel Welcome, "the sea-washed, fly-blown, scorched hotel along the coast, whose walls [are] washed primrose above the blue lapping water."*[29] *There she writes her poem "Picus Martius" & reads Laclos's* Les Liaisons Dangereuses.

[24] Vaslav Nijinsky (1889–1950), Russian ballet dancer.

[25] This is the original conversation which Cocteau later related in "Le Théâtre et la Mode," in *Masques, Revue Internationale,* 1, 1 (March 1945).

[26] Rupert Doone (born Reginald Ernest Woodfield) (1903–1966), British dancer and, later, theatre producer. Cocteau's lover in the early 1920s, he is the long-term lover and companion of the British painter Robert Medley from 1925 until his death.

[27] Butts's story "Scylla & Charybdis" first published in *Several Occasions* (1932).

[28] Butts, unpublished essay, "A Small Town" (1928), Butts papers.

[29] Butts, "The House-Party," in *With and Without Buttons and Other Stories,* 25.

For Paul Robeson was written: "Blessed are the pure in heart" [Matthew, 5]. Also (Monroe [Wheeler]) "A little child lead them" [Isaiah, 11].[30]

[late November/early December 1925]

Paul said about his rugger playing. "I guess I went up to them & said a few wicked words, and they ran away." Remember the veins on his hand, like a smooth, perfect prehistoric tree.[31]

[December 1925]

World's worst uplift, I confess I find it a comfort to remember: [Kipling's poem "If" (1910) written out.][32]

Murray [Goodwin—unidentified] said: "Really, Mary, if we go on like this, we shall behave as badly as if we were Americans."

Isadora Duncan said: "By the end of it, they were all eating nuts like mad."[33]

Glenway [Wescott]* said that the difference in a photograph between a face & a tea cup was more striking than in a painting of either by a master. To be considered.

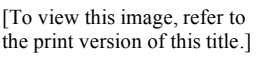
[30] Monroe "Monie" Wheeler (1899–1988), American book producer and translator. Long-term partner of Glenway Wescott.

[31] Paul Robeson (1888–1976), African-American singer and actor. Famous sportsman in his student days at Rutgers. Butts includes an indirect tribute to Robeson's powerful voice in the novel she is then writing by referring to a song arranged by Clarence White in 1925 and famously rendered by Robeson: "A negro song came into Carston's head: *Bear your burden in the heat of the day . . .*" Butts, *Armed with Madness,* in *The Taverner Novels,* 51.

[32] Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), British writer, lifelong influence on Butts.

[33] Isadora Duncan (1878–1927), American dancer and choreographer, pioneer of "free dance."

1926



[Early January 1926, Hotel Welcome, Villefranche]

From a Hindu folk-song:

> How does that unknown bird go to & away from the cage?
> If I could catch it, I would set the chain of my mind about its feet.

Jean Cocteau* 1st impressions: That like all people who are developed & good for something, he is utterly agreeable, & without pretensions. Gay (thank God all talk about art has stopped), witty, sincere & wholly intelligent. Now I wish talk about art hadn't stopped. Aged & suffering, Latin quicksilver quality. I like him, not at all afraid of him. He improves Glenway—perhaps "touches nothing that he does not adorn" [Samuel Johnson, "Epitaph on Goldsmith"]. I think that's the phrase. Yes, France's Brightest Boy.

To see a pattern between the groups here, well, if there is one, I'm the bead running on that string, & too troubled about. Beads that do not click all together. And I wish I knew how to begin that novel [*Armed With Madness*]. I know all it is to be about; no plot.

Remember his [Cocteau's] beauty when he talked about the theatre; a description of what I wrote in the "Week End."[1] That he is doing what I was too lazy, too disencouraged to do, a revision of Greek tragedy.

How, by another door, he has retained the masks, the stylisation of gesture (via the Russian ballet). Rupert [Doone], "le petit serein [serene being]." His beauty dressed as a Frenchman, not an english copy via [Coco] Chanel.[2]

About Nijinsky, staring about, très distrait, when he [Cocteau] was taken to see the *Sacre du Printemps* [Diaghilev—Stravinsky—Roerich].

[1] Reference to the (unidentified) short story Butts sent to Moore at *The Dial* on 20 October 25. See Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 150.

[2] Gabrielle [Coco] Cha[s]nel (1883–1971), French couturière who revolutionised fashion. Now chiefly remembered for the 'little black dress' and the perfume Chanel no. 5, she also designed costumes for the Russian Ballet (*Le Train Bleu*). A notable personality of the 1920s, she was a particular friend of Cocteau—they lived in neighbouring apartments in the Hôtel Particulier in the Faubourg St. Honoré (see 3 July 1928), she designed the costumes for some of his plays including *Orphée* (1926) and paid for several of his detoxification cures.

Staring about like a god. Also that what he admired was the turned in toes, he'd thought of, not the hunched, sideways gesture.

For the Book: I think it shall begin with the 'boys & girls' finding the Grail Cup. At S. Egliston.

Cocteau said: "I spoke once with un constructeur d'avion, & I said about the machines that they would soon look old-fashioned; & he said it was because we had never invented anything like a wheel. So it was all amelioration." A great deal more on amelioration, & how our machines are *brouettes* [wheel-barrows]. And what he wanted, he did not know, but something as good as that. Confusion of terms, but the same idea hatching.

Butts writes out T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" (1925).

Cocteau said: that Kipling, probably unreadable to us in english, went very well into french eg. "Love o' Women" ["The Song of Women"] & *Kim* [(1901)].

Remember: Cocteau, the night I had a touch of fever. That he had found life a burden always. Then de Q[uincey].[3] Then the want. Then the religion, because art could not be for its own sake or the people's, but for 'God's.' That he might be found a good servant (the last refinement of pride) "si quelque chose arrive" [if anything happens to him, i.e., he dies]. I said that his only fault was that he did not see that the 'quelque chose' is always there. He didn't see that. Spoke of an invisible world, ghosts pushing in & frightening us, like a disease. Of Stravinsky, of Picasso "qui ne voit rien que Picasso. Je pense que c'est un diable" [who has eyes only for Picasso. I think he's a devil]. But he is right. It is that which separates us from God. (And when he was saying this, & I was as moved as I could be, there was something in me that hoped he only said this to me, not to Glenway & Monroe; & was glad when he called them "les petits.")

FOR THE BOOK [*Armed with Madness]*. Get the Yank [Dudley Carston] as a person, & not protagonist. Alter stresses for that.

[3] Thomas de Quincey's nineteenth-century *Journal of an Opium Eater* would be a crucial work for opium takers such as Cocteau and Butts.

Cocteau said that there is God & the Gods; the devil too simple.

Translated for Cocteau 1) "I sing of a maiden." 2) "Hear the voice of the bard." 3) "Ye highlands & low lands." 4) "Duce, Epitaphs. Underneath this marble hearse."[4]

Cocteau said how, the last night of the sailors, each one of them was right "according to his kind" [Chaucer, "The Squire's Tale"]. The thing about his gift is his power of making fairy-tales out of the silliest, commonest properties. The lost shirt, the glass crocodile, the fried fish.

To observe the scene as if personalities were the only realities. That is what we do here.

Remember: Cocteau, as one thought, reading a tragic letter, really a demand for income tax.

What Cocteau said about the Signature, image like cutting holes in folded paper, pulled out made lace. That poetry was seeing things like part of the paper unfolded—more or less. About never using an image for the sake of an image. . . . Description of [Cocteau's play] *Orphée* [(1926)], but I shall see that. [5]

For the book
Grail motif: fake on part of Woodpecker [i.e., Picus Tracey]. Which is handy for Carston—2 instincts for treachery. How did they work?

After the storm. Villefranche
After posing for Eugene MacCown chez Jean, sleep, peace, one pipe [of opium], poem, "l'antiquité bouclée."[6]

[4] 1) anonymous 15C lyric; 2) William Blake, "Introduction" to *Songs of Experience* (1794); 3) traditional ballad, "The Bonny Earl of Murray"; 4) William Browne, "On the Countess Dowager of Pembroke" (1623).

[5] In the first Paris theatre performance in 1926 the French writer Mireille Havet played the part of La Mort (Death). Her drug addiction made her so unreliable that she was not chosen for the film version. See *Guillaume Apollinaire/Mireille Havet Correspondance,* ed. Dominique Tiry (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry, 2000), 15, 27.

[6] Eugene MacCown, American painter. In France since 1923. An exhibition of his paintings was shown at the Paris art gallery l'Effort Moderne in March 1925. His

Jean said: The Church as enemy of the supernatural. That what was the matter with Glenway was that he was unhappy because he could not write poetry.

Baudelaire on Poe "beau, élégant, correcte comme le génie." Cocteau's rage because I didn't follow his pronunciation of the American name!

On Cocteau: "Thinking of Saints & of Petronius Arbiter."[7]

On Montparnasse: the place which is the club for the people who hate, who are jealous, who never have a good word to say for each other. Valuable historical note.

[Butts copies out a long extract from René Crevel, *Mon Corps et Moi* (1925).][8]

25 February 1926

Notes on conversation with Cocteau (to recall the positions:)

He had a conversation with George Auric on art in general, & particularly the surréalistes.[9] For what this is worth: he had sucked a stalk of a kind of wood-spurge which grows here, very large & full of sap, on the shore towards Beaulieu. That night he was ill & comfortless, his tongue was burned & his nerves upset.

Today he was in bed, spent & ill. I went to Beaulieu to get him flowers. Tried the plant to see if it was the same. Burnt mine.

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painting of Butts has not been traced. MacCown's designs included the book cover for Nancy Cunard's *Parallax* published by the Hogarth Press. Butts would also have heard him playing jazz piano at the Boeuf sur le Toit. MacCown was a source of inspiration and despair for his friend the French writer René Crevel, who nicknamed him "Coconotte" and "Eugénie." Like others of this "Lost Generation" such as McAlmon and Atkin, MacCown did not realise his enormous artistic promise because of his increasing alcoholism. He is the model for Arthur Bruggle in Crevel's 1926 novel *La Mort difficile.*

[7] See 11 October 1931.

[8] René Crevel (1900–35), French writer, torn between his interest in Surrealism and strong Communist convictions. Lover of Eugene MacCown, who inspires him to write three novels (*Détours* [1924], *Mon Corps et Moi* [1925], *La Vie Difficile* [1926]), which describe the anguish of the so-called Lost Generation. Crevel commits suicide.

[9] George Auric (1899–1983), French composer, one of the "Groupe des Six" composers, which also included Louis Durey, Arthur Honneger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, and Germaine Tailleferre. A very close friend of Cocteau in the 1920s, Auric composed scores for the Russian Ballets and Cocteau's films.

Eugene & I went to visit him. Eugene struggles against him & the struggle in Eugene is a 'magic' struggle.

He talked to us of what is technically envoûtement [bewitchment]. Not a moving or emotional conversation. Gene [MacCown], having listened to as much as he could take in, left. (Memories not all remote, for me, *Ashe*, Eleanor, my Mother, John Rodker, things seen in London. What possessed Cecil Maitland etc.) Facts (via Cocteau) [about Surrealists]. They practise technical magic. Soupault.[10] Even Eugene MacCown a little instrument. Aim: to destroy Jean's life & creation; which they think they can do. That his name, or a word in a paper on him, as they say, drives them mad. That they are active against him, as is common knowledge. That they half succeed. He said they were killing him. That they boast of their power. Chapitre dans l'histoire de la haine. That Auric cares for both parties & that distresses Jean [and] may mark a little victory for them. Also his readmission to the church. But there I don't know enough facts. Only that this thing is serious. . . . I had to be dry as Jean is dry, unable to comfort him, convince him. Only try & make notes, with the usual difficulties.

Gene said, apropos of [Willa] Cather's *A Lost Lady* [(1923)], that men often became 'sod' because a woman much older than themselves when they were young had disappointed them.

3 March 1926 Nuit de Pavot [opium night]

Remember: Jean & Auric here after dinner. Auric crawled. Jean threw on my hat & scarf, found an easel & painted me on the blotting paper, ancient style artist Montmartre. The acting. How ill he was.

Jean said: "I am trying to use les mots sculptés, pas les mots colorés [sculpted words not colourful/coloured-in ones]."

from Eugene:

There was a young man of Peru
Who thought he was had by a Jew:
He woke in the night
In a horrible fright
And found it was perfectly true.

[10] Philippe Soupault (1897–1990), French Surrealist writer.

When Monroe asked me if I was afraid that Jean would do Glenway harm because of opium etc.

Jean said: about my poems that he thought I tried to be modern, & when I was modern, it was a thing dated & in time, not before & after & outside time as when I wrote about Delphi or the land.

The perfect day:

Woke up—said I was sick. Said I wasn't: it worked.[11] Fetched Gene to go to Saint Hospice. Called on Jean, who spoke about the poem with admiration & the best criticism. Walked to the Cape. Lunch, Gene, music. Then to the tower: Isis, magic plants. Home with Gene, singing, hardly at each other, but an approach, a contact. Slept. Wrote Jean's "Prayer" [unpublished poem]. Gay dinner—Auric—finished poem for Jean & gave it him. Gene played in the salon. Jean read his poem. In Jean's room—Auric's.

Nuit de Pavot

On that—lazy & rather sick. Too much erotic dreaming—should have slept before.

Found out how to hold conversations wherein one can hear people saying what you want them to say, the gestures, the words. Idea for Picus Martius poem. Written.[12]

Jean said: "vous cherchez, comme moi, les mots sculptés, pas les mots colorés [like me you search for sculpted rather than colourful/coloured-in words]."

Jean said; (of recent incest cases): "C'est le néoclassicisme sexuel [it's sexual neoclassicism]."

[11] Influence of Coué? See 1922 note 6.

[12] Picus is "the strange blend of bird-magician and human king." Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (London: Merlin Press, 1989), 117. This is the second draft of the poem "Picus Martius," which Butts wrote at the end of November 1925 in Villefranche. At the beginning of December 1925 Butts drafts a letter (in her journal) to Roy Martin in which she addresses him as "Picus Martius. I might explain why you're called that but you might think it flattery." Picus is the name given to the character in *Armed with Madness* and *Death of Felicity Taverner* who has great insight if not magical power. "Picus Martius" is first published in the American little magazine *Hound & Horn,* 3, 2 (Jan–May 1930), 230–3 and then in the British *Soma,* 3 (1932), 41–3.

[Possible title] for the Book: "In the Wood."

To translate Jean's *Orphée* for him (Asked to do it!) Accepted.[13]

For two poems: Auric like a large, wise witty Buddha.
The Easter Tree Jean gave me.[14]

Jean said: "that some people had real fairy-tales in their lives, friendship & things like that; but that they had to pay for them." I knew what he meant. Walk today along the Dais. I shall always remember him when I see stone walls with white & green sea-plants growing between the stones.

Cocteau's epitaph:

Vous tous qui haissez que la déesse change
Que sur la terre Dieu groupe autrement ses anges
Vieux coqs inattentifs au silence de l'oeuf,
Sachez que pour Cocteau rien n'était assez neuf.
Il aimait le soleil, parce qu'il sera terre,
Sa muse fut une aide, une éléctricité;
Des poètes pareils n'ont pas le droit de citer
Pourtant Dieu les oblige à ne jamais se taire
Et semble avoir besoin de leur complicité.

[All you who hate the goddess to change, or God to group his angels differently, old cocks, inattentive to the silence of the egg, know that for Cocteau nothing was new enough. He loved the sun because he will be of

[13] In late April 1926 Butts drafts the following in her diary: "Telegram for Jean: Malédiction sur votre traducteur [Monroe Wheeler]. J'ai corrigé 40 pages. Il invente, il ment, il fait une recherche des mots maladroits. Il aime les guillements. Il se passionne pour les fautes de style. Vos phrases, belles, correctes, élégantes comme Edgar Poe se montrent comme si elles avaient été trempées en melasse. J'ai beaucoup changé. Je reste votre amie fidèle et furieuse. Marie." [Curses on your translator. I have corrected 40 pages. He invents, lies, seeks out clumsy expressions. He loves quotation marks. He adores stylistic errors. Your beautiful, precise phrases, with all the elegance of Edgar Poe's, come across as though they've been dipped in molasses. I have changed many things. I remain your true and furious friend, Marie.] Butts's work on the translation has never been acknowledged. For more information regarding this translation see Wescott papers.

[14] Incorporated into Butts's unpublished poem "The Little Party" (1926).

the earth, his muse was a help, a kind of electricity; such poets have no right to quote, and yet God forces them to never be silent and seems to need their complicity.]

(written lately at Villefranche)

With Auric: asked him again the root of Jean's trouble with the surréalistes. Root of the matter, on their side, in the 'cabotinage' [histrionic behaviour] which so displeases Gene. . . . [Cocteau] patronised them, & would answer back & explain, from the moment [in 1917 when] he had written the "Cap de Bonne Espérance" [(1919)], his first important thing. Cf. 'rise' with [André] Gide when he was still a boy, & Gide half in the right. Too much fuss over *Parade* [(1917)], at the time of Verdun, as if it was another *Sacre du Printemps*. History of maladresses, & some pure bad luck. He is a 'classic[ist],' they 'romanticists.' André Breton on "le bidet comme une guitare," when "une guitare comme un bidet" would have been tolerable.[15] Too many explanations, & superb, maladroit gestures like dedicating his new poems to Eluard who will not understand. Faults of taste & tact.[16] Auric is very wise.

[From draft of letter to Murray Goodwin—on their failed relationship:]

But the thing to do with you, I've found that out in the last six months, is to turn you into a fairy story. Make poetry out of you. For you. It might be a true story, Mur, if you would let it.

You see, much thinking later & Jean's company have given me vision. He & I are part of strange events; as he says in a new poem "of affairs that are happening the other side of the stars."

Remember: Jean's eau de cologne he wanted to throw away, which scents the room with magnolia.

"Tristesse effroyable [dreadful sadness]," can do nothing. Should do so much. Away from Jean, the future makes me afraid. As it did. I feel the sunlight making fun of me. And feel that, naturally, too vain. And Jean said: "you must not be idle with a talent like yours" And I am too impatient; will have things quick as I want them. So I miss.

[15] André Breton (1896–1966), French Surrealist writer.

[16] Eugène Grindel "Paul" Eluard (1895–1952), French Surrealist writer.

Lou Coutour: the pine forest. The avenue of old figs; the grass on each side, rather raw & dull, springing with a kind of lily like lords & ladies. The wind that was more than singing, that brushed through millions of trees. I have never known anything like it. Could never leave it, once I had lived there. Shall go back. Have not found a name for it. The wind came & went, ebbed & was there all the time; turned the wood silver; was the wood. And the trees were wind, & the scent went through.

Cedric [Morris] said: on being 'queer.'

They start out a perambulating poem, & nature gives them several more years of boy's beauty than she gives a 'normal' man. Then if they shift into being more than a p-p, realise that the game is up, they'll develop a more virile good looks, & carry on all right that way. If not, neurasthenia, bad temper, development into 'aunts.' Examples various: himself, perfect transition.

Write a poem about Jean as a 'rite de passage' for me.

Eugene's song:

Would you like to sin
With Eleanor Glyn
On a tiger-skin?
Or would you prefer
To err
With her
On another fur?[17]

27 April 1926 [Hôtel Royal, 212, Boulevard Raspail, Paris]

On the poem "Rites de Passage": Lett [Haines] & Cedric as well as Jean Cocteau part of that rite—which might be into 'reality,' what the world is.[18]

It is all very well to say: accept the world for what it is. Who can? It is too indecent. Take the life at Montparnasse—where there is no love, no

[17] Apparently Butts writes this in one of her books for George Platt Lynes. See Pohorilenko, *When We Were Three,* 61.

[18] Arthur Lett-Haines (1894–1978), British painter and writer. Long-term lover of Cedric Morris. Haines draws Butts, see "Mrs Butts in Paris 1929," in "Arthur Lett-Haines," Redfern Gallery Exhibition Catalogue (1984), no. 27. "Rites de Passage," *Pagany,* 2, 2 (July–Sep 1931), 62–3.

honour, no generosity of strength. And for me this odd homosexual wave, which leaves one without physical consolations. 'Rite de passage' through hell. Hell is separation from the Gods; & my friends were always too much gods.

No one to tell anything to. Have I even to give that up to be an 'artist'? Murray [Goodwin] said: "you have no judgement; you're romantic; always seeing people as you want them to be." The only answer being that I want them to be what is in them, what only a poet sees. I don't mind their normal reality. It's most interesting. Only [I need] not vision, but their gentleness, their kindness, for them to have imagination for me.

Largely cured by Murray. Then by a party at Tony de Gandarillas' [flat]; the Coromandel screen at last—Auric's music.[19]

Thought of [Murray Goodwin] in [Shelley's] *Hellas*:

"the momentary oceans of the lightning;
When heaven & heaven alone is only light
In the thunder night."

Rather like that, but the first line is Shelley <u>seeing,</u> a pure aesthetic value. What he should be revalued on.

[early May] 1926

Ford's rhyme:

" . . . soon we shall be gone where there is no more sea
And no more Americans."[20]

Literature or observations for a literature of hate. What Cocteau feels Montparnasse [is]—"le club pour les gens qui se haïssent." [the club for people who hate each other.]

[19] Jose Antonio (Tony) de Gandarillas (b.1887?), Chilean diplomat, lover of the British painter Christopher (Kit) Wood. Gandarillas is living in a sumptuous flat at 60 Montaigne Ave, Paris 16. Described as "the king of gossip," by Francis Rose, *Saying Life* (London: Cassell, 1961), 386. The coromandel screen is a central trope in Butts's story "Brightness Falls" in which she interweaves and refutes Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life.*

[20] Ford Madox Ford and Stella Bowen are living in Paris at this time. Butts may well have attended one of their parties. Ford's unidentified rhyme incorporates a reference to Revelations 21, 1 and also perhaps to Blavatsky's "secret zone" in her *Secret Doctrine,* see 1917 note 27.

The Bar'nesse [café] & the portrait of Djuna [Barnes], Glenway [Wescott], all those people. Dobson—& I dislike it because it's 'agin' me, & because things do not grow or create like that.[21]

[In his essay "History"] Emerson said: "You shall not tell me by languages & titles a catalogue of the volumes you have read. You shall make me feel what periods you have lived. . . . We must become . . . Greeks, Romans, Turks, priest & king, martyr & executioner." Weigall quotes Mark Anthony saying to a man it might have been necessary for him to kill—"remember, it is much harder for me to say it than to do it."[22]

At [Tony de Gandarillas' flat] 60 Avenue Montaigne.

Remember: the black lacquer tables with the crystal & rose quartz.

Naps [Napier Alington] running downstairs.[23]

The bed with the blue cover. The lamp, the confusion of lacquer, jade, orange ivory. The people on the bed. The people on the floor. . . . Peace. "We might be at Salterns." Tony in his chair fixing cap. Jeanne [Bourgoint] in my arms. Auric with this toys. Fragile Jean [Bourgoint] so light in my arms. Naps angry & softened by the drawings. Tony saying he was a kind of saint. Talking softly with Tony on the bed.[24]

I have looked round the world of rising religions & found the people timid & wanting in sap, & what vitality of impulse they had turning into crankiness.

Again, I am sure that Mrs [Annie] Besant is tackling the question the wrong way round.[25]

Again I cannot describe, & do not understand & so cannot judge the nausea 'that sort of thing,' Celtic mysticism, theosophy etc. produce in me.

I wonder if & when my turn will come? If & how I shall satisfy at least my sense of power.

[21] Djuna Barnes (1892–1982), American writer. Probably Frank Dobson (1886–1963), British sculptor. Friend of Cedric Morris. Appointed professor of sculpture at the Royal College of Art in London that year.

[22] Arthur Edward Pearse Brome Weigall (1880–1934), British classical historian.

[23] Napier George Henry Sturt, Lord Alington (1896–1940), British aristocrat from Dorset who met Butts when they were both children.

[24] Experience incorporated into her poem "Avenue Montaigne," written in 1926–7, published in *Antaeus,* 12 (winter 1973), 151–3. For information on the Bourgoint siblings see 9 August 1929.

[25] Annie Besant (1847–1933), British theosophist and political reformer. One-time secretary to G. B. Shaw.

[In *Tertium Organum*, 2nd ed. (1923)] Ouspensky asks: why do we treat fourth dimensional expressions in terms of three?[26] "Furthermore it is necessary to understand that all objects known to us exist not only in these categories in which they are perceived by us, but in an infinite number of these in which we do not & cannot sense them. And we must learn first to think things in other categories, & then so far as we are able, to imagine them therein." This is a problem in every art & every development or change in the form of any art, notes, lines, words, colours. We have to "break up their lazy family habits" before we can create, i.e. approach reality, & do living work again.

We know the outside world & the existence of psychic life in us. One way of re-approaching: to start from what is not known rather than from that which is known. Describing a fourth dimensional world in terms of three. Spiritualist fallacy. The self element. We only see surfaces of the cube. Training to apprehend at once the whole cube.

We take 'matter' easily because we invented it.

Again, we have not a confused outlook on the real world, but a very lively & complicated view of a totally imaginary world. As art in mathematics: " . . . the line as the tracing of the movements of a point; the surface as the tracing of the movement of a line; & the solid as the tracing of the movement of a surface."

For the way things happen as they do—one can sense it—4th dimension space is the separating of a group of solids, binding them also together into a whole we cannot see.[27]

On 15 June 1926 Butts attends the opening night of Cocteau's play Orphée *in Paris. The character of 'La Mort' is performed by Mireille Havet, who will play a significant role in Butts's life between 1928 and 1929. Butts spends July, August, and part of September in Giverny et ses environs.*

Chateau Gaillard [outside Les Andelys]:

Because of picture in Green's *A Short History of the English People* "Chateau Gaillard from the south;" a good drawing, I said: "I did not know Chateau Gaillard was so near." The old Scots officer said "but one

[26] Parts of the *Tertium Organum* remind Butts of Fry's *Vision and Design* (1920).
[27] Basis of Butts's term the "knight's move," see 28 July 1929.

must shew it you, my dear child." And Mélisande [unidentified] thought of a picnic. And ten of us carried our senses & our races & our curiosities & dreams there.

More incuriosities than curiosities. We found: a garden full of Americans, a wet hill climb, greasy food on the drenched turf, the immense windy stone shell. I remember one window, wide & rising to a delicately sharp point, & through it the earth rushed up, a steep, green hill-slice.[28]

For Sergey [Maslenikof]*: "that he is dispersed—loving in one direction, laughing, working, thinking, also desiring in others; his idleness the common factor: his pride off at another tangent, that he is all aristocracy & one penniless boy."

If I had the 'right' to control him, that is the power, I would take him clean away to hills & the sea.[29]

Consider the parable of the talents. All his are buried.

(On *Tertium Organum* (contd))

Man outside time & space is the identity of Judas & Christ. The idea which created the Sphinx.

Also, *quod inferius sicut superius est*. That which can be expressed cannot be true.

The book is continually leading up to a climax of pure mysticism, to start again from current ideas & affairs. Good.

The positivist scientist, like a man counting the letters in [Goethe's] *Werther* to account for the suicides it provoked.

Contents of the book = noumena.

Over & over again: that by studying phenomena, we do not/cannot touch noumena.

I loved Jung's chief book [*Psychology of the Unconscious*], not so much for the truth of its ideas, as for the *escape* it provided into the world of noumena—I remember being a little shocked at this.

Often Ouspensky touches on the signature, as he touches the pairs of

[28] Experience incorporated in Butts's unpublished 1926–7 poem "Chateau Gaillard."

[29] Sergey is the model for Boris Polteratsky, the Russian character Butts is able to take "to hills and the sea" in her fictional Dorset coastscapes in *Armed with Madness* and *Death of Felicity Taverner.*

opposites, when he says that each thing "in an infinite series, truth becomes its own opposite."

Not necessarily in infinity!

Also that some day, if we understand, we shall find out something really vital & interesting—about the electro-magnetic field for example. *Newness* in common phenomena—how 'one silence differs from another.' Also, how I feel I could only work with this copy of Ouspensky because my personality has been worked into it. Also because I feel that I have drawn out its personality, or even that mine & its were mixed, a new creature, hanging about like a bright cloud.

The artist (or lover?) the only person who can understand the noumenon through the phenomenon.

For Sergey: the knight's move. He has to do nothing, he has only to know. (And he will not.)

On Ouspensky: I had always admired Gilbert Murray's remark that the weakness of all ancient thought lay in its final subjective appeal, an inner conviction of what was true, in face of facts: compare also his "*magna est delusio et praevelabit*" [the delusion is great and will prevail]. This seems to need revision.

The souls of old things.

Entry into the world of noumena by extension of the power of forming analogies. My earliest adult discovery, after my child's animism that talked to everything it liked, or which I felt lived.[30]

For a true critique on Freud's "dreams are the expressions of unfulfilled desire," it is necessary first of all to understand what is desire.

T.O. [*Tertium Organum*] contd XXII

We only call alive what we can recognise as alive by communication with it. Occasionally we feel timidly that certain aspects of nature are alive.

(That day on Kimmeridge Down, [Dorset] waiting for Cecil.)

[30] An understanding explored in Dorothy Richardson's story "Visitor" (1945).

On getting a little out of our categories one discovers many different kinds of existences.

On terror of infinity.

All art with mathematics of infinite magnitude entirely illogical. (Consider how the more 'like life' a picture is, the worse it is—a supreme illogicality.)

28 July 1926 in Vernon, Cafe de Commerce.

T. O. [*Tertium Organum*], XXI

Our logic (of concepts) illogical to a dog. This never to be forgotten sense: in spiritism men "attempted to construct the noumenal world on the model of the phenomenal, that is, against reason against nature, they wanted at all costs to prove that the other world is illogical from our standpoint . . . that the other world is nothing more than an extension of ours. The 'other world' of spiritists or spiritualists in all existing description of it is a naive & barbaric concept of the unknown."

Consider . . . the inadequacy of Jane Harrison. After the enthralling & admirable description of ritual, their development from folk custom; nothing.

(Perhaps that is why when trying to get at the real, the straight approach usually fails. Giving me my idea about the knight's move. An attempt to slip through the pairs of opposites.)

I dislike [Edward] Carpenter because he is a bad poet, & his followers didn't please me.[31] Nor his ways & simplicities. But that is in part a personal snobbery. And what is personal snobbery, in general & mine in particular? An intellectual snobbery, a 'good & bad' fastidiousness.

On the mystic pitfalls! I wonder which my own are.

For a poem:

That the life we lead, wanderers with a few choice things, is like the life of an earlier earth: even our consciousness is becoming like theirs, a bare room, a bit of jade, the mysteries.[32]

[31] Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), British poet and socialist reformer. Followers included E. M. Forster and D. H. Lawrence.

[32] Incorporated in her 1926 poem "Frère Doue Amye," quoted in Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 172–3.

Giverny: The roaring gutters of Montparnasse decanted down at week ends from Paris. Long fast cars & heavy bodies filling up with drink.[33]

‡ Ouspensky works out: each aspect of each thing real & unreal—a most unusual perception of things as folds of a screen. What the screen is that is the next step. O what it is a screen for? What it is round? ‡For a poem

In September Butts rents a flat at 14 rue de Monttessuy, a short street in the seventh arrondissement, close to the Eiffel Tower and the Seine. It will be her home until she leaves Paris in June 1930. Sergey Maslenikof lives there on and off. During the autumn of 1926 she transforms the four rooms of the flat into "four magic boxes,/Accessible and inaccessible. Step of the earth, a refuge, an address," reads Sisley Huddleston's France and the French *(1925) and Gide's* Les Faux Monnayeurs *(1926); has the decree nisi of divorce served on Rodker (15 October 1926) and "writes feverishly . . . under the shadow of the Eiffel Tower."*[34]

Sergey [Maslenikof] said: "Comme je suis changé. J'étais comme un appartement en désordre, et vous avez [sic] entré, et m'avez fait les portes en crystal qui donnent sur un jardin plein de belles choses. Maintenant, j'ai de l'air." [How I have changed. I was like an untidy flat and you came in and gave me crystal doors opening to a garden full of beautiful things. Now I can breathe.]

(for the rest, see "Lettres Imaginaires" II)[35]

3 November 1926

Duff [Twysden] v. Kitty Cannell.[36] Duff's deplorable & lovable follies—retranslated into conduct of the dirtiest, & cause of more of the misery

[33] See Butts to Wescott, Hotel Baudy, Giverny, Vernon, [undated], Wescott papers.

[34] Butts, "Frère Doue Amye," see note 32. Benvenuto [unidentified] to Arthur Lett-Haines, 7 December 1926, Tate Gallery Archive, London.

[35] For her "Lettres Imaginaires" (1919), see c. 19 November 1917. Also probably a reference to Butts's epistolary narrative *Imaginary Letters* (1928) where Sergey is the model for Boris Polteratsky. See c. 19 January 1928.

[36] Lady Duff Twysden (1892–1938), then separated from her British aristocrat

common to us all in the life of Kitty, women alone & struggling, 'dying for want of true love' like any old romantic heroines. No, not like that, but realistically, suffering from the universal 'hate, fear & contempt.'

Notes: the world & one's style: I find it almost impossible to write well—or even without affectation when I wish to deal 'straight' with what we call the beautiful or good.

If the money comes:

£50 bill: chair for house; 2 cushions; large bottle "Après L'Ondée" [perfume]; disks [records]; 'Nest of drawers'; hat; evening frock; afternoon frock [. . .]

In early December Butts learns from Douglas Goldring that Cecil Maitland has committed suicide.

[early December 1926]

On Cecil's death:

Thoughts which have occurred to me out of the chaotic anguish; the ones that help me—I do not know if they have any prompting outside myself, do not dare hope they have. Later in the day, I was 'bad' in the kitchen, crazy with weeping, & I felt as if I saw his face in misery, down somewhere on the ground, & understood that I was making his suffering, . . . if any of the theories are right, he would suffer—worse. . . . Then, almost as if he were near me that I was not to grieve for that increased his pain. I asked Sergey if he had heard it said that over-grieving made it hard for the dead, & he said: "yes, we say that in Russia. It was I who told you." Rather cross. Then it was like a murmur which has changed the quality of my crying: "forgive me & I shall be forgiven." I can't quite yet, but I shall sleep now & tomorrow go out & get my hair waved, & try & live again.

Again, the fourth day, I saw Duff, & at the end I told her what I have written here. And she said at my doubts: "don't be a fool, Mary. Trust

husband. Kathleen (Kitty) Cannell, American ballerina and journalist. Butts may be referring to the fact that both Cannell and Twysden are at this time lovers of Harold Loeb, American editor and proprietor of the little magazine *Broom.* Cousin of the American millionairess Peggy Guggenheim. Loeb is "amicably nicknamed Low Ebb." Goldring, *The Nineteen-Twenties,* 209.

what you've seen. I know it's true . . . It's his expiation . . . trust the things as they come to you." When I asked: "shall I find him again?" she sensed about a bit & said—something about a chinese red thread that tied people in pairs, & that it was like that & I should.

The fifth day. There are the normal horrors, grief & imaginations, old songs, bitterness etc. Then there come intuitions that have a different quality, what I call real about them.

1927

11 January 1927

The marvellous consciousness of [Cecil's] presence, that came & went & seems coming back. Today's script [automatic writing] that he was my ally, for ever.

[mid-January 1927]

Health very much improved, & lots of what seem like 'signatures' about. A book—[M. R. James'*] *Five Jars* [(1922), Ford's] *Ladies Whose Bright Eyes* [(1911)] leading up to yesterday's script . . .

Goodness only knows how much of this is subtle self-suggestion. But I feel what I can only call love round me, a sense of an evil time, a separation over, of an active, tender creative force I have only to rest myself in & do well. . . . & I have not an idea what has done it, if it is not Cecil joyfully repairing the harm he did. And I must have tapped some source of psychic life.

Script: The practice seems to be that at the start one's hand is 'taken,' & the words come out clear. Then some force weakens, & you feel as if you know what is to be written & must attend to the pen. If you don't, it falls away into scribblings, generally an illegible repeat. Then the force weakens again & you get things slowly, less decisive, signatures, repetitions, scrawls. Till you stop. It is very tiring.

19 January 1927

One odd thing: Cocteau said how Radiguet dead led him to books & passages in books.[1] I opened a volume of the Encyclopaedia & was stopped by the name Ker, the Jacobite spy—with a feeling that I was meant to look.[2]

Kitty [Cannell] said: Violet Hunt said about Ford & Mrs Patmore "she gave him a garnet cross, & he wore it round his neck, & in the moments of greatest excitement I found it in my mouth."[3]

Mrs Patmore's hair is dyed (red).

For the book [*Armed with Madness*]: keep it sec, cut out a lot of the situation expressed in terms of pain.

[1] Raymond Radiguet (1903–23), French writer and Cocteau's former lover who died of typhoid at age twenty.

[2] For Kêr, see Glossary.

[3] Brigit Patmore (1882–1965), Irish art lover.

Let the story carry the situation—stick to the story, let it tell itself & its implications. Formula is chief. Necessity for a new experience of reality after the failure of religion, the rarity & for certain purposes too great 'concreteness' of art. The complete inadequacy of any enthusiasm or any one localised improvement in human life. A new lever behind experience, not based on catch-as-catch-can-visions.

Cecil's death (continued)

A period of no writing—script. It went off, so did the intensity of my thought about him. Then, two nights ago, I had an impulse to try again, & being desperately tired did not. Was in a bad psychic state, nightmares. Yesterday a sheet, all love names, & a drawing I thought was to be a bee & which turned out, on a second shot, a rabbit. But often 'vif' [strong, vivid] sense of his presence & help. As if I could pray to him. Incredibly glorious & strong. Also: that between 'that presence' & my life is a third state or thing, something unclean, dangerous & frightening, very visual as a wreck of rotting bones & skin, (I rarely think of his body, I hope they cremated him). It's very physical, visual, turns my stomach sick.

I do not know to what this apprehension refers outside my imagination. I've a theory that it is the rotting remains of the evil in him. It is as if the splendid one was standing by my shoulder as I write, helping me to write this. To whom be accomplishment, love, tranquillity, Paradise.

For the Book: Whitehead's theory of organism in *Science and the Modern World* (1926), critique on "the molecules blindly run or they do not."[4]

From the same: "The question now arises whether all enduring objects discover the same principle of differentiation of space from time; or even whether at different stages of its own life-history one object may not vary in its spatio-temporal discriminations." Again: "It follows that, if we can conceive a body at one stage of its life history as in motion relatively to itself an another stage, then the body at these two stages is utilising diverse meanings of space, & correlatively diverse meanings of time."

Cecil's death: now have had one or two messages which seem to be about the life he is leading now. They are about as unsatisfactory as those always are—either because they are trying to express one life in terms of

[4] Butts quotes from the British mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* (1926) in an epigraph to her epistolary narrative, *Imaginary Letters* (1928).

another, or—I am not certain what the 'or' is—something to do with the quality that makes Bligh Bond distressing, not at all Cecil.[5]

To be tried again.

Two things I have learned, the first rather forced upon me: That my chief fault is impatience, & all that implies. Then the truth that it is ridiculous to have so little logical faith in the good as I have shewn lately. I know that all my well-being has come from certain practices & preoccupations, & for years I have kept up a sort of scepticism about them, patronised them a bit, been humble & abashed before a lot of evil rubbish, not used my own weapons I have proved; (so, relatively, with people). Not in a crisis. Want of everyday faith in the powers from which I have always derived all my good. Surprising when you come to think of it.

Fold on fold of the Coromandel screen, from Cecil's death, Cuddy's [Camilla's] illness, . . . my people hurrying across . . . my own illness, decor of Sergey's petulances & my reactions, vice versa, . . . [6] No rest, furious movement, which at the same time does not move; as if everything was a way of shewing everything else under a special, its individual formula. That is the real experience out of all these. Experience of what?

I have gone a long walk to learn wisdom; it would not have tasted so bitter if I had had a few people to praise me for what I have that is good. How much of these disasters began with Ford saying that *Ashe* was a bad book, when I was over-tired with writing it & John agreeing, up to Cecil's decline & fall?

For the Book (written with the pink feather pen) Part II. Dispersal . . . Might bring in a game of chess. It is all a question now of the round-the-cornerness of things, which is the way we come to at least, to the use of our unsuspected faculties. But even by formulating this, we are leaving the knight's move. It is always one further ahead. Probably the best not to think about it, & stick to six tales.

Cecil Maitland's death

Coming back in the taxi, opposite Les Invalides I felt that it was he gaining more & more power to influence me right; . . . I had a sense of a sanely glorified spirit doing what it wants to do (I can only use banal

[5] See 10 July 1918.
[6] See 27 April and c. 28 July 1926.

(ghostly) expressions, lighting my way.) Anyhow, I have found out, thanks largely to rereading Henry James, that there are thoughts, almost thought forms one must refuse to entertain emotionally. I don't mean not understand, 'get' them, but, strictly, entertain them.

Spengler's *Decline of the West* [(1926)]
Greece—ahistoric, cf. the opposite in Egypt "they wanted myth, not history." What would they have done with a watch? (the Athenians).

[Metcalfe's] occult book *The Smoking Leg* [(1925)], rather good stories on the usual tricks. One, "The Bad Lands," valuable, i.e. having had the same experience (especially a glaring white house set in pines), am personally convinced it's a way of saying the truth.[7] [Henry] James, on the other hand, stories too good to be true, atmosphere convincing.

In the early months of 1927 Butts begins an intense relationship with Virgil Thomson.[8] *He calls her his "storm goddess" while she calls him her "unrest cure."*[9]

[7] John Metcalfe (1891–1965), British writer of supernatural fiction. The protagonist of "The Bad Lands" discovers a road leading from the coastal town where he is on holiday that takes him, through countryside felt as ineffably evil, to a large "white house dimly set in giant pine." However, neither the road nor the house are there all the time, and there is a suggestion that his vision is a precursor to mental breakdown. Butts would have been particularly sympathetic to the existence, as expressed in this story, of: "strange regions, connected, indeed, with definite geographical limits upon the earth, somehow apart from them and beyond them. 'The relation,' he said, 'is rather one of parallelism and correspondence than of actual connection. I honestly believe that these regions do exist, and are quite as "real" in their way as the ordinary world we know. We might say they consist in a special and separated set of stimuli to which only certain conditions are able to respond. Such a district seems to be superimposed upon the country to the south-west of this place." Metcalfe, *The Smoking Leg and other stories* (London: Jarrolds, 1925), 252, 257–8. This "strange region" is precisely what Butts experiences on her astral journeys, evoking and exploring it in her powerful stories "Brightness Falls" and "Mappa Mundi." Butts writes about Metcalfe in her 1933 study of supernatural fiction, "Ghosties and Ghoulies" in *Ashe of Rings and other Writings,* 348–51.

[8] Virgil Thomson (1896–1989), American composer. Thomson comes to Paris in 1927 to study music with Nadia Boulanger. Although what Butts calls "the Virgil adventure" in her journal does not last the year, from then on until his death, Thomson promotes the publication of Butts's work in America.

[9] Virgil Thomson, *Virgil Thomson* (New York: Knopf, 1966), 86. Butts may well have been thinking of Saki's story "The Unrest Cure" (1911).

Virgil [Thomson] said "Joyce's *Ulysses* is swell reading" & about his being the reporter & parodist in excelsis: "Had to do Ulysses on old Homer's map, & is now trying the R . . . [illeg]."

It is this splitting up of events into an irregular, inconvenient positively demented time sequence that bitches things up. Why can't the relative things happen together, simultaneously or in close sequence? Instead we live like jugglers, keeping a dozen balls in the air.

From [William] James, *The Will to Believe*.

"The talk of believing by our volition seems, then, from one point of view to be simply silly. From another point of view, it is more than silly, it is vile. When one turns to the magnificent edifice of the physical sciences, & sees how it is reared; what thousands of disinterested moral lives of men lie buried in its foundations, what patience & postponement, what choking down of preference, what submission to the icy laws of outer fact are wrought into its very stones & mortar; how besotted & contemptible seems every little sentimentalist who comes blowing his voluntary smoke-wreathes, & pretending to decide things from out of his private dreams! . . . so it is only natural that those who have caught the scientific fever should pass over to the opposite extreme, & sometimes write as though the uncorruptibly truthful intellect ought positively to prefer bitterness & unacceptableness to the heart in its cup."

Great man! . . . on the need, illogical, unanalysable for order in the universe that sets the scientist going. Think of the psychoanalysts, Sullivan on this.

[Feuchtwanger] *Jew Süss* [(trans. Muir, 1926)]. Reubens & the most tragic of interior histories, people forcing the worst out of each other. On human cruelty, the one bad thing in each character, which can spoil every other quality. An almost unbearable book, divinely impartial, characters subsidiary to life. *Life* in the book is real more than the people, & the movement in it like the weather or the winds.

Shall I ever make a poem out of this spring day with the sun shifting in through the shutters, the warm coolness, Paris humming at a distance; & tears because there are fairy tales in which the pain stops, a miraculous right-about-turn of misery into accomplishment, that never happens (not to the little courtesan in *Jew Süss*) & Sergey my wretched fairy tale, who,

all the same, is a prince, & the sudden loss of blood & William James' "adorable genius" calling me to order?[10]

Between Cannes & Villefranche.

Relief to get back even to so half male an atmosphere as Glenway & Monroe's after the purely feminine of Cuddy's 'pension,' a children's (french) world. And all that is admirable.

I suppose Glenway & Monroe's is about as much male as I can stand, (not quite male enough) who am hardly ever with women. The paederast world my choice for milieu. Glenway & Monroe not the perfection of that, but a more virile presentment.

Conversation with Glenway. On the necessity for our memoirs, of our age. Are we a lost generation? [11] Courage to publish, necessity to be novelists not memoir-writers to earn our bread. So much more to tell than Pepys . . . [12]

Fairy tale over Sergey Maslenikof: what ought to be, might be, could be. Perhaps we are "a lost generation." I've had others, but this one is more perfect, less simply sexual, less illusion, more tenderness perhaps a spice more hope. "dram of sweet is worth a pound of sour" etc. [Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*].

For the Book [*Armed with Madness*]: Felix at the bal musette.

29 March 1927

Long play today & last night with the imaginary Sergey.

Note: a bead of opium boiling over the flame, the needle trembling & the bubble humming.[13]

Glenway & Monroe almost the sinister side of P[aederasty] not the camp, not aunts—yet.

The weather—I think it is the purest of human pleasures. Today sun & high wind & a tendency to white blight in the sky. The Mediterranean quivering, shaking, bright blue & silver-wrinkled. Dust storms, palms roaring.

[10] William James (1842–1910), American philosopher and psychologist. Elder brother of Henry James.

[11] A term famously attributed to Gertrude Stein.

[12] Samuel Pepys (1633–1703), British diarist.

[13] See note 31.

Odd dreams, a way out of Paris, then down into Italy, grapes & workmen, & blue & green & gold, & a silly woman. Then somewhere, far south, the bay of blue-green water, the green & blue pyramid in it, the grave of a hero, english xviii century. I was there again, & there was a verse about him (it may have been engraved upon a stone). It reminded me of Jonson's (Herrick's?) [poem] "High-Spirited Friend," that style, period, good poetry & written by a sir somebody something, name reminiscent of [John Wilmot] Rochester.[14] But the point was the colour of the water & the pyramid (made of polished tiles like enamel) its wonderful familiarity, that it had some age long connection with me, & stood for what is lovely, tragic & heroic.

One of the series, at least, with grotesque details, & magical beauty.

What could be done again, metrically, with the final 'calls' in poems like [the mediaeval French lyric] *Aucassin & Nicolette*: "Soeur, douce amye." To be tried.[15]

For a story: The tapette confessing himself to Jean Cocteau. Entry of Glenway with a face like Satan, the 'change' checked, the 'salvation' not come off.[16]

If one could know the relations, if they are not wholly fortuitous, whatever that means, between say, my game with the Sergey of my imagination, my account . . . of what the real one had done, & that woman playing russian disks & "Dinah" he used to play at the flat, may be playing now, & having a distressing effect on me.[17]

Like Archimedes, if I could find my point d'appui, I could move the world. . . . The new lever?

Virgil [Thomson] said: "call the book *People among Trees*" & "My god, dearie, let down your back-hair & be yourself."

He also told me that a sailor told him to drink a glass of water that had been left out in the moon overnight for health in general.

[14] "High-Spirited Friend" is indeed by Ben Jonson.

[15] See 1926, note 32.

[16] Basis of "The House-Party" dedicated to Jean Cocteau and first published in *Pagany,* 1, 1 (Jan–Mar 1930), 7–24.

[17] "Dinah"(1925), words by Sam Lewis and Joe Young, music by Harry Akst.

UN RAPPEL A L'ORDRE

What I believe, after ten years, I am coming to see: (see note before on finding my lever). What interests me—up to now, I am an unsuccessful writer, lover, dubious mother, of no social distinction. Well liked, but my looks are going, & to a certain extent, my health. Well, I can write & I want to, should never want to do much else. What for? To present reality under ideal forms. Just for the art's sake? yes & no. In the old cant phrase, I want to shew people beauty—soundness. Now the best work cannot be made up wholly from the ugly & the unsound. And our world is both. I begin to understand several things, labelled bolshevism, surréalisme, eccentricities of paederasty, *The Paris Daily Mail*, my husband [Rodker], Phil [Lasell], the Jew-boy here, the decline of goodwill, charity, friendship, erotics, the bankruptcy of religion as practical & not practical, defended & attacked everywhere.[18]

What, apart from the specific work of writing is what interests me?

Nothing but spiritual development, the soul living at its fullest capacity, using itself. . . . My intelligent error has been wrong diagnosis, a false idealism which turned to despair when spoilt. (Impatience & timidity thrown in & badly-managed pride.)

What I want to do, is have to quicken my work (no need for technique now, I know it) a spiritual perception that shall make life valid again. Now: blind faith & life-worship are insufficient, along with absolute mastery of form, common-sense, humour, science & any known religion as at present practised . . . & all these are necessary, except perhaps the last. That is the lever, the new synthesis, or vision or fact. I have not got it yet, but I am beginning to know what is wrong with the time. And many of the things we do are not wrong, it is our way of doing them. They are very good things—Paederasty & jazz & opium & research.

What do I love, outside writing & clothes & opium & the weather & my friends? I have always had since I can remember an incomparable pleasure in finding someone psychically sick, & hearing about it, & seeing if there is a way out. This feeling very much mixed up with sex, bed not necessary, but makes things work better i.e. any powers I have seem to work better in that relation. I've always wanted to make my lovers well, sense powers liberated in them, fears in the dustbin, raw life taken in &

[18] Philip Lasell, Wealthy American, relative of Thomson's patron Jessie Lasell. He introduces Thomson to Butts. "Gifted for many things but working at none, . . . [he] was a playboy of wondrous charm." Thomson, *Virgil Thomson,* 86.

coming out translated. Plenty of egoism in this. Now it has worked & it hasn't worked naturally in varying degrees; but for what I want to do in that way to reach all hearts, in bed or out, I should for this sickness have something clear to offer. Not just general faith, & surely nothing to preach about, something I know myself, that, without explanation when there should only be contact, would answer no faith, no hope, nor even desire. Would arouse desire (through me now & then for my own sake) for more than me.

This mysticism of mine, enough for me because I 'get' & 'know' things which I cannot describe or explain, on what is it based? What last step have I to make? But if I could make, under no matter what image or indirection, a living clarity of it, great art & great power—life giving—would flow through me, enough at least to refresh my generation.

Hitherto, when I have most needed it, my lever has failed, or rather I haven't had one, to keep so-&-so steady, & myself, in relation to them, in this frantic life, with the rot getting into the liveliest minds & spirits.

What is this mysticism of mine?

Letters for THE FAMILY HORROR (that is to say the people who, for various reasons, are cursing me).[19]

Virgil said: "button up your fly & don't give your right name." Camp.

Philip [Lasell]: glossary: faggot for queen, screaming bitch for queen.

[19] Butts drafts a letter to Tony Butts in her journal in spring 1927:

> Glenway is here & Monroe, Virgil Thomson, Phil Lasell, & up & down the coast half the world. I can get about with a stick a little & work night & day revising the book, now finished. Called either "In the Wood" or "People among Trees." Much in the order of [Thorne's] *When it was Dark* [(1903)], an erroneous find of the cup of the sanc-grail—reactions in a country house, the Foyot & the Boeuf sur le Toit. . . . Glenway these days is simply august. It's getting up to royal reception point, like the german movie man you told me about. Once that point conceded, they [Glenway & Monroe] are darlings. . . . One odd thing: Since Cecil died, I've picked up my old trick of automatic writing; didn't consciously set out to do it. It was as though I had to. Got a strange script, supposed to be from him—I hesitate—of course *proof, proof* was what I wanted. Got Latin puns on names I didn't see at first. Things drawn—graphs from the same. Things I'd forgotten—Always followed by 'Don't you see?' 'Won't this do?' . . . An unspeakable comfort came with it, not because of it.

Plain sewing—what I thought it was.

Taking the metro = going down. "been down on everything except the Titanic."

Virgil said: "if the entire population of U.S. were placed end to end, very little, if anything, would happen." Book on statistics.

[Charles Ignatius] White's *Sketch of the Origin and Progress of the Catholic Church in the United States of America*, quote in Ch III: "The seeker shall not rest till he finds that which he seeks, but when he has found it, he shall wonder, & when he has wondered, he shall be master & when he is master, he shall find out."

I think if I had to choose the wisest saying there is, I would choose that. I knew it as a girl, lost its text, but it is & always has been part of me.

The view from my window [at the Hôtel Antipolis, Antibes] of the castle-fort [by Vauban] above this town with the sun on it: <u>like the sweet apple</u> [Rossetti, "Beauty: A Combination from Sappho"].[20]

For the Book [*Armed with Madness*]

Possible subtitles: The Wounded King; "Like the sweet apple"; Offshore; A Professional; In & out.

Race legends: <u>English:</u> She wanted so/very much to be married that/& she married the wrong man.

<u>French:</u> Isn't it hell to be found out? (Adultery & escroquerie)

<u>Russian:</u> Why can't we all go mad?

<u>Italian:</u> In spite of Rome & the Renaissance, we still look swell riding on the Pincio.

<u>U.S.:</u> If a fine young man & a sweet pretty girl got to bed together, wouldn't it be wonderful?

Auric said, apropos of *Le Chat*, "Who ever heard of AEsop? It's all in la Fontaine."[21]

[20] Sebastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633–1707), French marshall and writer who created fortifications on the French frontiers. Butts visits another in Brest later in the year, see 18 August.

[21] Reference to the Russian ballet *La Chatte* (Balanchine—Sauguet—Pevzner and Gabo). First performed on 30 April 1927 in Monte Carlo.

I first arrived at a special & enduring love for Virgil when he told me with the explanation of Sergey: that a miracle was always possible.

Dawn at Villefranche, the lace of cloud over gold, east above the mountains; blue-black, silver patched water, a few late lights in the town. The holy calm.

On Max Eastman's *Marx, Lenin and the Science of Revolution* [(1926)].

On Hegel's pairs of opposites. Marx, escaping or trying to eliminate animism.

Escape from animism involves the question: reconcile yourself with life or change it. . . . On *Das Kapital* as the Working Man's Bible. On Marxian thinking, animism as opposed to science & the way things are done.

For a poem: (done).[22]

Repeats: the sea's edge here in bright weather; the cacti along the de Maleissye terrace in their variations.[23] Two ways of looking at the same thing. Crete.

Happy here.

Book, Titles:

The Egg in/& the Cup
Landscape with Birds
Bees under the Roof
Armed with Madness

Glenway—chosen.

Our Irresponsibles:

Jacques de Malleissye; Napier Alington; Evan Morgan; Sergey Maslenikof; Murray Goodwin; Philip Lasell; HW [unidentified].[24]

[22] Reference to Butts's poem "Juan-les-Pins" (1926), partly quoted in Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 181–2.

[23] Jacques and Ketty de Malleissye, French aristocrats, friends of Mireille Havet, living at Villa Alexis, Boulevard des Anglais, St Raphael.

[24] Evan Frederic Morgan (1893–1949), Welsh poet, painter, musician, and aristocrat, he inherited the title of Lord Tredegar in 1934. During the war he was the unpaid private secretary to the parliamentary secretary of the Ministry of Labour.

Oh these boys with more sensibility than intelligence & more appetites than will. The embassy to Achilles. The life that has almost come through.[25]

3 June 1927 [Paris]

A memorable day: Morning after fever at the lawyers: that to the good [divorce absolute from Rodker]. Then up at Jean Guérin's—the cat, the eggs, the fun picture.[26] After [Edward] Titus & his hesitancies & white grey face.[27] The books.

Rest, smoke, Miss [Natalie] Barney's party.[28] A long cinema. This street, Rue de L'Université lovely in the light. Dinner on the quays. Virgil—sleep.

[25] First mention of the idea which will be transformed into Butts's poem "Heartbreak House," with its hearking back through Shaw's 1919 play of that title to classical myth:

> Heartbreak House is their last address who were once the earth's best
> . . .
> O Lord, call off the curse on great names
> On the "tall, tight boys"
> Write off their debt
> The sea-paced, wave-curled
> Achilles Set.
> . . .
> A Kouros is Achilles
> these young gentlemen
> the stuff of gods.

"Heartbreak House" is first published in the American little magazine *Pagany,* 1, 3 (Jul–Sep 1930), 1–4 and then in the British journal *Soma,* 3 (1932), 46–8. Forty years later it is included at Thomson's suggestion in *Antaeus,* 12 (Winter 1973), 147–50. For the "tall, tight boys," see e. e. cummings, "Sonnet—Realities III" (1922). For "the embassy to Achilles," see the Iliad Book 9.

[26] Jean Guérin, French aristocrat and painter. Friend of Cocteau, lover of Walter Shaw.

[27] Edward Titus, Polish publisher and editor. Owner of the press At the Sign of the Black Manikin, which publishes McAlmon's *Contact Collection of Contemporary Writers* (1926) and Butts's *Imaginary Letters* (1928).

[28] "Party at Miss Barney's—What we authors have to expect. Nardine[?] read his new version of Genesis, & there was Djuna [Barnes] in French & Gertrude [Stein] in both, & mint juleps (what a drink!) & the first collection of society geese imaginable. And lots of fun & flattery. She says she is giving one for me." Butts to Glenway Wescott, undated [early June 1927], Wescott papers. Natalie Barney (1876–1972), wealthy American writer, centre of the sapphic circle in Paris in the 1920s and includes Djuna Barnes, Renée Vivien, and others. Thomson set some of her lyrics to music.

When Gertrude Stein is tolerable:
Owls & bees
If you please
Paul make honey & orange trees
Michael make coal & celery
Louise makes rugs & reasonably
long.

At Gertrude Stein's: catalogue

One gold console table, one cabinet box with gold drawers on it between two red engraved glass candlesticks holding two candles embossed in a lattice of red & green & gold wax.

Two cups & saucers of rose porcelaine & medallion heads in profile on the box.

A blue & white & crystal glass horse.

A gold bird in a gold cage that sings a song; or a few notes from time to time.

Two altar ornaments, a leaf composed of petals in gold foil, & some in enamel, black & red.[29]

A figure period after Tang green & brown terre cuite, the green only glazed. A green papered box with a watch-glass lid over a still life of coloured flowers. A fire-screen painted in oils after Van Spaendock. A square blue & white vase from Spain. A pair of candles with blue garlands.

A pair of candles each with a bunch of moss-roses, in the heads of two stout figurines, spanish baroque.

A paper picture by Picasso in a glazed wooden box.

A papier-maché ashtray like a chinese cup, green outside, black & white squares within.

A glass set with minature glass. 'magic eyes.'

A round white glazed bottle of a lion, head open on top to pour, curls of the fleece yellow rings separate in high relief.

Virgil said T. S. Eliot is a 1st class or refined literary mortician. He will write a book called the Art Party when he is old. No, a completely devastating philosophical dissertation on Aesthetics, the Principle & Bunk thereof.

Witness—Mary Franeis Butts [signature]

[29] Inspiration for Butts's story "From Altar to Chimney-Piece" (1938).

Frances said: the thing Americans most dislike is a soft heart & a hard head & a quick tongue.[30] They want it the other way round & a slick tongue.

Landscape in storm: no, roofscape:

Dark, yellow black June afternoon, all the lights. From bed, looking on to the courtyard & the old roofs. Light changed to dark ice grey. Over the irregular roofline one tree some way off, brilliant pale green tossing in what seemed a windless sky shot with million upon million rainrods hard as steel. A wink of white lightning. All the rest as usual, but the roof & lead gutters & lead sheetings round the attics washed like running, polished glass, pouring with the water racing down & always in the same place. A riot of water cups where the rain sticks stuck. Sometimes the lightning flashed gold.

Sketch for Our Fumerie including Jean Cocteau as prototype, Auric as instructor, Tommy Earp model. Jean Guérin working model, Mary Reynolds as annex, Mary Butts ditto.[31]

Is there a person among our 'ever widening circle of friends' who is not smoking, wishing to try, about to give it up, giving it up, given it up, starting again or superciliously denouncing the practice?

Real row with Virgil because he has spoilt or broken or violated the magical secret between us. I don't want him to be an old lady's tame musician, just a salon composer.[32] A wide cast of the net brought strange information about Gertrude [Stein]. I can only repeat & repeat & repeat that a real relation is worth the effort to retain.

I said: "not a bad breakfast, opium & strawberries."

Edward [Titus?] said: "opium, that dark strawberry of the soul."

[30] Perhaps Frances Robbins, American heiress who had given Wescott $3000 after the publication of his *Apple of the Eye* (1924) to enable him to travel to the South of France to write his next novel. Robbins herself spends time in Paris in the late 1920s.

[31] Basis of "Fumerie" (1998). Mary Reynolds (1896?–1950), wealthy American widow, who also had a flat at 14 Rue de Monttessuy. She was the long-term lover of the French artist Marcel Duchamp. Described as "the queen of the American Montparnasse." Thomson, *Virgil Thomson,* 110.

[32] Thomson's friendship with Stein results in his operatic setting of her work *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934), although begun in 1927.

Meeting with Tommy Earp . . . Conversation today & he said that a book, left below in the bookcase of the little Foyot salon, *The Power House* [(1916)] by John Buchan was tolerable because of its decent writing & a favourite of Cecil's.[33] So I stole it & read it in swallows between callers . . . & it was about the thing, the union of high intelligences outside human & social formulae occupied in making the world unlivable. . . . apart from female conservative instincts, no one less objects to change & experiment than I. Empirical sort of nature, my criterion is how an experiment. . . . Is this merely a course of Col. John Buchan? Or, as I really believe, is Col. John Buchan an expression of it, an expression simple & popular like an illustration in a logic handbook? . . . On the Russian situation I feel as if I was sickening for an attack of the Book of Revelations.

I believe that much of my empiricism & conservatism comes from a gradual complete want of interest in phenomena displayed in pairs or in the three-dimensional world. Behind Russia, Delphi, Einstein. Or as Ouspensky say firmly: Magic.

Side reflections on U.S.A. I have noticed that except as an expression of private preference, morals in the sense of code or of 'honour' do not exist. Nothing but a private sensibility to fall back on in case of danger or doubt (Virgil & I) or difficulty.

[On whether Maitland is sending her messages from beyond the grave:]

A scientist & an artist are both needed, & a quality I don't know the name of to fuse both their qualities & bring out <u>what is</u>. . . . if it is true at all, it is a fact in a higher dimension being expressed here in terms of three.

To observe a translation from an unknown into another most imperfectly known is extraordinarily hard.

Tried the *Sortes Virgilianae*.[34] 2 passages. Volume of Shelley picked at hazard because I felt my elbow impelled.

(i) passage at me "from the Scythean wilderness/ A wind arose wrinkling the earth with frost" etc [*Prometheus Unbound*].

(ii) passage on the dull, cold activity of the devil in *Peter Bell the Third*. Not bad![35]

[33] John Buchan (1875–1940), Scottish writer and publisher.

[34] For Sortes Virgilianae, see Glossary.

[35] In 1928 Butts reads Yeats' *The Trembling of the Veil.* Much of it accords with Butts's experiences and convictions, e.g., the use of "sortes"—see Yeats, *The Trembling of the Veil* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1922), 245–6.

From NYH [*New York Herald*] "Virile Australian Vegetarian Tears Telephone Book in Two" (cutting kept).

For the new book Virgil calls "The Conspiracy."[36]

If I write it, if it is there to be written, it might start from the little Sergey in England. Histories of hate. On old-fashioned morality, "what Aunt Ada would have said." Ada was partly right about hate & justice. She would have said that if—say the russian people's expression of their sense of injustice had not given way to hate; if with making their revolution, even getting rid of the old gang, they had done it sanely & mercifully, hate encouraged would not have let "the Thing" through; that here was natural as well as spiritual law.[37]

In July 1927 Butts is invited to the summer house of the American millionairess Peggy Guggenheim & her husband, the writer Laurence Vail, in Pramousquier, a small coastal village in the south of France between Toulon and St Raphael.[38]

To-night, Pramousquier—looking out not over the sea, but into fog over it, clear of the house, into nothing, full of light (full moon).

17 July 1927

Had the Dream again, variant on the unique rare house-dream of my childhood I have not had since during the war.

This time it was in Paris, a tangle of infinitely familiar, non-existent

[36] First musings on her next novel *Death of Felicity Taverner* (1932).

[37] From draft of letter to a friend, possibly Frances Robbins, see note 30:

My dear Frances

No news. A new poem begun. Blessed Paris. Saw Mr Calder twice. Toys a marvel—there's a man with a mission. Congratulations on the bird & the worm. Am sending round all the appreciators & people likely to buy that I can. He is a dear, & we get on fine.

I'm extraordinarily happy, playing with the flat & my friends . . . news from the four quarters of the earth drifts in. To be made poetry of & stories & common sense.

Alexander Calder (1898–1976), American sculptor.

[38] Peggy Guggenheim (1898–1979), American art collector and millionairess. Married to the writer Laurence Vail until 1930. After their divorce Vail marries Kay Boyle.

streets round the rue de l'Université, opposite the Louvre. I went in to find the room & live there, where I had lived before. It was black & white & grey & dirty, tangled & old beyond belief, mysteriously Paris, like no place I have ever seen, alluring, withdrawing itself. Nina [Hamnett] lived across a passage; later I found Eleanor [Rogers]. The search was almost final, then the intensity grew less, I drifted off down corridors with Eleanor, round a small court at the end, looked out into burning green trees & flaming trumpet shaped flowers not cannas, not quite tiger lilies, growing out of black, damp earth. The dream was passing then into the commonplace, as it did before at the end. But at one moment, I nearly opened a door.

For Sergey on Blake: "Christ was his symbolic name for the imagination, & the tomb of Christ (the Abbey) could be no other than a shelter, where imagination might sleep in peace until the hour of God should awaken it." Yeats' Introduction [*Blake* (1927)]. "Nothing is pleasing to God but the glad invention of beautiful & exalted things." Idem.

Also for Sergey
I have given you a golden string
Only wind it into a ball
And it will lead you to heaven's gate
Set in Jerusalem's wall." [Blake, *Jerusalem*]

Mind improvement at Pramousquier:
Read: Wyndham Lewis' Shakespeare & Macchiavelli [*The Lion and The Fox* (1927)]; Yeats' *Blake* & Introduction; Wells' little book on Russia [*Russia in the Shadows* (1920)]; Laurence Vail's *Murder! Murder!* [in MS, as published only in 1931].

A woman from U.S. on a tour: "& he took me out in his gondola, & shewed me the doge of Venice sitting at a window of his palace smoking a cigar: & he didn't look a bit like a dago" (philological curiosity).

I wish I knew what is behind the word CO-INCIDENCE.

22 July 1927

Machen on the study of occultism: "But I would advise any curious person who desires to investigate this singular chamber of the mind to be-

ware of over-thoroughness . . . avoid all deep & systematic study . . . For if you go too far, you will be disenchanted."

23 July 1927

Night of news of Peggy's sister's death: high wind, ~~sirocco~~ mistral, as usual.[39]

Note above how I first wrote sirocco, which does not blow here, because I had read about a death & a ghost & events during the wind in Egypt, & had read about that country, & was concentrated on Mrs Vail's [Peggy Guggenheim's] sister's death. Also after several brandies.

Secret of Wyndham Lewis: "As, however, hatred & dread are the principal components of the love that is offered to a divinity—"

Good note on the jester, Thersites, the royal clown, that he is there against νβρισ [hubris], for luck.[40] And on Wilde: "determined to paint England red from the bottom up."

Laurence Vail's mother's husband said when the family decided that it was time she had a lover: "I can't hear of it, it would be bad for my nerves."

An idea came to me when I was reading Spence's book on Atlantis [*The Problem of Atlantis* (1924)]. He is talking of Osiris, the dying & rising god as the root European god & so Atlantean in origin. He claims him to have been the original mystery god, behind Eleusis for example. He quotes [the Egyptian] *Book of the Dead*, the "halls" through which the soul goes & their initiation literally in the mysteries. It has struck me that, if these initiation ceremonies carried any sense of reality to the initiated, those "halls," corridors, passages to get to one place, where the god was, or the secret of secrets, must have answered an experience, which in its turn would coincide with what I call the core of my dream experience, the going through a house to one room, where also is the 'secret of secrets,' & the sense & experiences which accompany it.

[39] Peggy Guggenheim's sister Anita died in childbirth.
[40] For hubris, see Glossary.

28 July 1927

"En l'an trentième de mon age" [Villon, *Testament*]—I am now 35, & I think that I begin to see.[41] For the first time I am conscious of ambition. I believe that I voluntarily turned from early success, first, & this was involuntary, because of my mother's odious pretensions (& where have they got her? & after the war flogging a dead horse never appealed to me). I believe that I knew there was a way & that I have followed, half instinctively, half consciously a route by initiation. The image of the corridors always returns. Something I had to learn which could only be learned in obscurity, adventure & reflection & that now, if I can get over the money difficulty, I shall come out into power from a deep well & a deeper spring. Ainsi soit-il, as Cuddy [Camilla] says.

The sea at Pramousquier; in bed at night the water on the open rocks below makes several sounds, glass, music, knocking very imperative & broken, a sound like talking, a drone that rises to a roar, almost a train noise, of, I think, pebbles drawn under & back.

[Forster] *A Passage to India* [(1924)][42]

Perhaps its most enduring importance lies (a new glory of our letters, the most interesting book of my generation, a living story full of sap as a tree, its sole fault that it might have been twice as long) in its first hint of a new consciousness. The caves & Dr Godbole. Forster, like myself, has been fingering that for years. In the *Passage* out it comes where it should on the knight's move.

Notes on Pramousquier: Last ten days, a fantastic passage. The quality of those endless, eternal blue woods, a bloom on them reminding me of those xviii century watercolours on a chinese white vase we had at Salterns. They were always magic. Then there is the sea, now racing in under the sirocco. A colourable imitation of the Atlantic but without its timbre;

[41] Butts was actually thirty-six. She lied about her age, e.g., "Born 1892." Butts to Gilbert Seldes, 15 April 1924, Dial / Scofield Thayer papers. This has led to a number of mistaken claims about her age and her dates of birth and death.

[42] Edwin Morgan Forster (1879–1970), British novelist. Butts corresponds with him in the 1930s.

last night bubbling & swirling & dancing up in the moon. The night Peggy disappeared, it was cool & exquisite; she lay in my arms & thanked me for 'spiritual light,' who gets hysterical when Laurence asked her to cash a cheque for me.

To sum a great deal up, there has been death about. Whether from her mind brooding on her sister, or mine on Cecil, or both or something else, it is like a tall black wall, waving in & out. Laurence Vail & I like two figures with torches keeping it in its place. . . . I am looking something in the face too awful for sadness, how glad I shall be to be away, stir, chance, solitude, adventure, perhaps a moment of love . . . But this house is not blessed.

Aldous Huxley's essay called "Pietramala" is very valuable to me, when he writes of Faraday's visit there & goes off into notes on mysticism.[43] The pages are worthy of his grandfather [Thomas Huxley] in their clarity—the good, bad & indifferent mystic, the setting out of the conditions of the state, which is likely to be the future's chief enquiry. The decency of the lives of the men of science, who begin where the others left off, while each artist starts again from the beginning.

18 August 1927 [Brittany]

Brest: where I have never seen so many fortifications, in fact, the only thing I enjoyed was the last, Vauban's old fort being smashed by a bottle-shaped smasher dropped from a crane: & retrieved & dropped, while the sliced stones, buckled & the dust flew.

Race over the moors of Finistère . . . Warm gale roaring, drenched with rain, breath clipped with air. Cornwall half a latitude further south, up long moors & down into valleys & across foaming, racing streams. Deep fern & boulders & heather, patched with that terrible green that frightens me, & makes me think of something I don't remember.

24 August 1927

Did ever woman have a better window? The bay of the City d'Ys & far opposite the Menez Horn, a hill about which I have my suspicions. The fishing fleet tears in & out, aided by the motors, a left-hand blessing of

[43] Aldous Huxley, "A Night at Pietramala," in *Along the Road* (1925).

the war, when, mine-sweeping over, the loup de mer brought their engines cheap, & are half independent of wind & tide. After the Mediterranean, there are tides that strip the rocks, & gulls; & above the Menez Horn "wild cloud mountains drag the hills along" [Meredith, "Love in the Valley"] & reaffirm a tolerable poem, only they are not "wild." Wild was put in for scansion, tall or calm would have been more accurate & it gives Stevenson & his sort away.

When the sea alarms me at night, I can grow more alarmed, & less, thinking it is the Princess Dahut shrieking.[44]

The butt of the little island is rounded in profile into almost a sphinx. Every now & then when the sea is level, the Atlantic hunches a shoulder & a wave mounts, runs, turns over, thunders, breaks, hisses, withdraws. So silent, so stealthy a thing exists nowhere else, so light & monstrous a use of power. Pitiless, all the usual words, & the whole land magic—saturated until one is too choked to write.

Half the reason of sex is not children or orgasm, but this mutual exchange of psychic life.

[27 August 1927]

Keltic Day

Had to go to Tréboul to get cigarettes, on a fine half-cloudy afternoon, late, end of August.

Found the creek of the port filled by the flood tide. (And such a tide as moving seems asleep.) All the boats in, their blue nets run up the masts to dry, transparent wings, the creek full of glassy water, packed with them. One painter doing a bad picture; one, english, I fancy, a good one. The catch in, & all the men out on the quay, in orange & crimson & blue. Resting, some skippers bright & clean as stones & fresh, others, crew, like them, or down all stages of patched filth. All the women out, in black cloth, a black velvet & white caps. They were busy over the catch. All spoke Breton.

That quay was an unknown country, they called to each other & watched me. . . . they were very aware, & their life very fierce, strong as the colours they wore.

[44] Princess Dahut was the daughter of Gradlon, King of the legendary city d'Ys. Encouraged by her lover she steals the key to the door by which the sea is kept at bay. When she opens the door, the city is flooded and submerged.

Then, a little afraid of them, I found a way round an empty bay, round the bay now empty. Atlantic blue, & against a purple cloudbank over the Menez Horn gulls wheeling, whiter than white. The same as jade, wet, light-struck grass that so impresses me.

After being bewitched yesterday, the grand Pardon de S Anne de Palud is a washout.[45] . . . & I had Huysmans' disgusting *En Route* with me, a sick, uncleanly soul. Or am I being too 'healthy-minded?'

Too much Keltic land has an odd effect on me, I am still over-charged with unformulated magic. Virgil [Thomson] holds my ankles firmly to the ground; he is very good for me & to me.

[Sinclair Lewis'] *Elmer Gantry* [(1927)]. In the Balzac way, du côté de chez Balzac. A great advance, now & then it is fused—the scene of Elmer's first conversion, the particular occasion & set of people become, through the intense particularisation, universal, the event become the Idea. It didn't happen then & there, but is always happening & happening without time. One "looks a moment into eternal light." Not all the book is so good; there is too much sheer chronicling, time-sequence of events hurrying, scenes & situations not sufficiently withdrawn. But a pretty great book & an appalling & delightful one.

Sanc-Graal again: mentioned by Jean [Cocteau]. A sequence may be hatching. I have an idea that the one dream I have so irregularly has for its secret the Graal secret, or one comparable.

September 1927 [14 Rue de Monttessuy] Paris

This is the happiest period I have spent in years, since the first time with Cecil. It began after Pramousquier where I was wretched (money & bad auras chieftly) at Antibes, Juan les Pins . . . [&] it carried on in the Midi with my friends Mary Reynolds, Bob Chanler, Evan Morgan, Walter Shaw, where I was penniless & didn't care.[46] Carried forward here the lovely night with Virgil when 'our union was blessed.'

[45] A Pardon is a picturesque religious festival in the Celtic province of Brittany.

[46] Robert (Bob) Winthrop Chanler (1872–1930), wealthy American artist. Walter Shaw, wealthy American, lover of Jean Guérin. According to Nancy Cunard, Shaw was in Paris in the 1920s studying photography with Man Ray; see *Nancy Cunard:*

Here . . . less financial trouble: Virgil's love; Phil [Lasell]'s return. More friends. Cocteau, Alexy [unidentified], Pierre [de Massot], Douglas [Goldring], Val [Goldsmith].[47] Une Ronde, la Ronde de Reubens. Love, friendship, a little work, some cash. (Much less opium needed.)

With it all, the sense of a new spirit beginning to blow.

Plan of a 'great' book squaring itself.

The blue bar of cigarette smoke the sun made piercing the shutter.

The little club evening Phil [Lasell] came [to] at the Boeuf. [Douglas Goldring's wife] Malin's beauty: discovery of the Trocadéro square, more France.

The moment in Jean [Cocteau's] room, my fur drawn across me. I saw myself in the mirror in a curious half profile, through harmony knew myself on an equality with him. We were discussing a tragedy & I was so glad.

Small things a little money has added to the house: pieces of jade, moonstone earrings. A gold box of Chanel scent. Peaches, melons, honey, frocks, visiting cards.

The presence of Cecil, always.

The new 'looking-into' the Sanc Graal.

The rather easy opium fight, as if we were laughing at one another, pushing an adored friend reluctantly & temporarily out of the house.

THE NEW BOOK

Carry on from the last, *Armed with Madness*. Which might well have been called 'the Waste Land.' Eliot always anticipates my titles!

Re-reading Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* [1920)].[48] A fruitful book, cf. Eliot, & as Jane Harrison & Frazer are to me. (Eliot & I are

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Brave Poet, Indomitable Rebel 1896–1965, ed. Hugh Ford (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Co, 1968), 38.

[47] Pierre de Massot (1900–1969), French art historian. A friend of Mireille Havet, Massot introduces his lover Robbie Robertson to her in 1927. Rather than lose Robbie to Mireille, Massot accepts the ménage à trois and their opium-filled evenings. See Massot, *Mon Corps de Doux Démon* (1932). Robbie's relationship with Mireille ends in April 1928 and Robbie marries de Massot later that year.

[48] Jessie Laidlay Weston (1850–1928), writer and translator of Arthurian romances. Now best remembered for the influence of her *From Ritual to Romance* on Eliot's *The Waste Land.* This study traces the Grail legend back to the classical cult of Adonis, whom she identifies with the maimed Fisher King. The Wasteland was brought about by the death of the Vegetation spirit. Perceval's quest will restore life, and the Grail and the lance are, respectively, symbols of the female and male sexual organs. Her "Ritualist theory" is now largely discredited.

working on a parallel.) Her origin for the Grail. In Frazer-Freudian folk-myth, i.e. popular, instinctive, life-stimulation, more babies, butter, bees, birds. Now the Mysteries had an exoteric & an esoteric side. [Weston] stopped [at the mass]. But before & after, based on the physical symbols of growth & sex, there is the final mystery. It was known, has been, still is that there is another process even than the mass, of which the Mass even is an exoteric sign, whereby man escapes from space, time, his three dimensions, is not 'united with God,' the Mass, devout exercises, but is changed becomes himself God.

Eleusis, the Orphic tablet, Waite on the "other consecration," Greek apparently, the Church came down on.

The last form of this in Western Europe was the Grail Quest. Man depassing the time & space boundaries, going through the fourth or 'astral,' where the danger, horror, loveliness, deception, delight lies—into what one can call the Fifth, where the pure forms are & he becomes what he is for there, is the source, there the Lance & Cup pass in & out.[49]

The value of her [Weston's] book lies in her truly scientific account of the nature symbols employed, her historic research into the last persons & last texts of the final mysteries, known as such in Europe, with her appreciation of the fact that the search for the Grail is equally possible today.

And what I know, that we are all starting out on a new search:

And that the opposite, the springboard, the wasting of the Waste land, the incurable wound in the King's side is the thing + which has expressed itself in Russia.

Virgil said of T. S. Eliot [parodying "The Hollow Men"]:

"between the idea & the creation
falls the shadow of his education."

Also: If he would place the creation before the idea, no shadow would fall between.

Baudelaire on those moments when man "se sent à la fois plus artiste et plus juste. . . . C'est une espèce de hantise, mais de hantise intermittente, dont nous devrions tirer, si nous étions sages, la certitude d'une existence meilleure, et l'espérance d'y atteindre par l'exercice journalière de

[49] Anglicisation of French verb dépasser, meaning to surpass or go beyond, similarly "ratéd" in mid-December 1927 is an anglicisation of "raté": spoilt or missed.

notre volonté." [feels simultaneously more an artist and more just/true/perceptive. . . . It's a kind of haunting, but an intermittent haunting, from which we should draw, if we were wise, the certainty of a better existence, and the hope of attaining it by the daily exercise of our true will.] *Les Paradis Artificiels*

Remember: The flowers Virgil sent in the red & gold jar, dahlias pale violet & rose against the yellow wall, in the corner, a door for imagination to come through.

How (over Gertrude Stein) we were again blessed.

"Sex is swell."

"Nature is grand."

"Opium is appetizing."

"Life is lovely."

"Food is fine"—etc. etc.

My hunch that I saw Gertrude Stein as evil because she made me clairvoyant to an evil thing, so, suspecting her as wishing to take Virgil away from me, I identified her with 'It.' She may well, I see now, be good.

What made me after years 'see through' T. S. Eliot (not to lose an ounce of my admiration for his poetry) but in my estimation of his mind. He said: "that in some such a way—the mondains who went to M. Bergson's lectures at the Sorbonne [Collège de France] may have been said to have been using their minds" ["Imperfect Critics"]. The provincialism of that, at last understood, decided me.

Remember: All day 'running wild' Paris. The blessed money. The 'hunch' that came with the pipes: the lovely house I am collecting, earrings at last, fires in each room.[50] Beauty in order coming out of desolate, strict confusion.

What troubles, shocks, makes me particularly suspicious about the russian revolution, in contrast with the french. Its want of any form—creative form—that I've heard of, which one could call, nastily, idealism. No Marseilleise to set people marching & singing for ever. No tag like "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité." Nothing like the idiotic, adorable study, & ap-

[50] Butts's flat in 14 rue de Monttessuy becomes one of her magical places. See Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 171–3.

peal to misconceptions of Roman history. Nothing but bitter materialism, & a mysticism out of hell.

TO-DAY'S GREAT THOUGHT.

Remember: how, after a bad psychic & physical state (malaria, before the curse?) when I had almost asked why I had been forgotten, something like a gold wall walked in, & with it health & spirits & a fine, gay night at the Boeuf. [51] I have no idea what caused it, not opium, no event . . . —a physical shifting from discomfort to comfort often comes a day or so before my period (which, I hope, by the way, is coming on).

FOR A STORY: Mary [Reynold]'s tale, "After the funeral."[52]

17 October 1927

The song comes back:

"I know moon-light, I know star-light,
I'm walking in the star-light. Lay this body down."
(For the book?) [53]

Remember: this day: opium down to 7 pipes; all the things done; grief over Virgil put in its proper place; the new hat; two taxi-men of the old school, the shooting, skimming, rush between sort, & one elderly crab.

Saw [Fritz Lang's] *Metropolis* [(1926)]. Best camera picture I have ever seen.

Met Aleister Crowley again. Handled it fairly well. Old Bob Chanler, I think, mentioned [Buchan's] *The Power House*. Crowley said that there were one or two inland towns in China where chemical horrors were being made & possibly another (on the Russian-Polish border?) a subterranean place. I asked "by who" & "for what" & got no answer.

But Virgil is with Gertrude Stein & all against me.

[51] Paris nightclub opened in 1922, named after Cocteau's and Milhaud's ballet *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* (1920). Butts writes her unpublished poem "Le Boeuf sur le Toit" in 1927. See Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 164–5.

[52] Basis of Butts's story "After the Funeral" (1938).

[53] Butts does indeed incorporate the anonymous song "I know Moonlight" into *Armed With Madness,* in *The Taverner Novels,* 38.

Cécile Salomé [unidentified] on the new Man Ray photographe: "l'une est Madame quand elle pense, l'autre est Madame quand elle parle."

Saltus' *Lords of Ghost-Land: A History of the Ideal* [(1908)] (abominable, silly book).

1 November 1927

Roy Martin back.[54] A moment in the taxi when the sweetness came back too, the magic. Then Boeuf [club]. Da capo of all that happened before. Mary [Reynolds] added, drunk, jealous, intolerable. Whispered conversation & 'histoires' & too much drink. And the sight of Roy utterly no good now, a wan white deathshead, who was nice & strong, attractive man, full of mana & bird fun. So much for another of the 'Achilles set.'

I sometimes think I have no one, but the two dead, no one on this earth, but Daddy & Sandy [Maitland]. "Free among the dead" [Psalm 88] & that only there love is.[55]

But they put back [Gilbert] Murray's book [*The Rise of the Greek Epic*] into my hands, which I understand now twice as well, especially the Aidos part.[56] How that explains, throws a not wholly satisfactory light on my passions. . . . on the appeals of the greek spirit, I won a victory over my self.

?A Signature? [M. R.] James' story "Casting the Runes" [(1911)].

My idea of an Anthology of 'Magic' poetry or prose has never come to anything; meaning by that of poems & passages when the actual state was evoked, as in "Lully, Lulley" ["The Falcon," trad. Ballad] or certain stanzas from [Hogg's] *Kilmeny* "in yon green-wood there is a wake," in contrast with most of the rest, the vision of Mary Queen of Scots, for example, which is telling, not evoking. Eliphas Lévi or [Spenser's] *The*

[54] Roy Martin, unidentified. Butts does refer to his dancing at one point. The inspiration for Butts's poem "Picus Martius" and an erstwhile member of her imaginary Achilles Set.

[55] Captain Butts, Butts's father who died when she was fourteen.

[56] For Aidos, see Glossary.

Faerie Queene (mostly) in comparison with certain ballads, some of Yeats, the choruses of *The Bacchae*, part of *The High History of the Holy Grail* [(1910)].

It seems to me now that I have not studied our literature of ghost-stories for nothing. I have always followed them, since I was a child. Since [Bulwer Lytton's] "The Haunter & the Haunted" & anything I could pick up anywhere. Till I halted several years, in the perfections of Professor [M. R.] James.

5 November 1927

His *More Ghost Stories* [(1911)] arrived today & the collection by Lady Cynthia Asquith [*The Ghost Book: Sixteen New Stories of the Uncanny* (1926)]. With a collection I have, & memories, ideas occur.

The old ghost-story: 2 types.

Historical & rationalist (i) Lytton's "Haunter & Haunted."

A yarn. (ii) Mrs [Elizabeth] Gaskell's "Old Nurse's Story"

(iii) Kipling. Far East Variants. He has, on reflection, to be subdivided.

(a) "The Bisara of Poree" (Orient)

(b) "A Matter of Fact" (Sea) (Clerk Russell)

(c) "The Dog Heresy" (domestic)

All this is most hastily improvised; but I feel as though I am to make a collection, an anthology, & analysis not out of the mystical material, but out of current re-actions to the 'super-natural.' Supernatural will do as a moral.

It occurs to me, I must get his last book, that [M. R.] James' attitude is altering. He started out to horrify, now there is more basis: & there is his recurrent note, an 'elemental' used by using a live or dead man.

Tales which have impressed me most:

[Rudyard] Kipling: "Bisara of Poree"

"The End of the Passage"

(with all its treacle) "Brushwood Boy"

[Edward Bulwer] Lytton: "Haunter & Haunted"

J. A. Middleton: "The House of Horror" (in spite of its being a horror of style & vulgarity of thought—good material)

[M. R.] James: "The Mezzotint"

"Casting the Runes"

"A School Story" (cf. Buchan)

[E. F.] Benson: The one about the House, which happened first in a dream: "Room in the Tower"

"The Thing in the Hall"

[H. G.] Wells: "Door in the Wall"

[Clerk] Russell: "The Upper Birth"

The one founded on the Evcombe screaming skull.

[John] Metcalfe: "Nightmare Jack"

[May] Sinclair: "The Victim;" & the one about the lovers & the husband & Emmanuel Kant ["The Finding of the Absolute"]

Barry Pain: "The Undying Thing"(variations on the Glamis motif).

At present there is a tendency, less for the thrill, armour & clanking chains pretty well gone out, as an attempt at rational illustration of a rational beyond, or other side. This is seen at its best in May Sinclair & E. F. Benson.[57] At it worst in Violet Tweedale, who has interesting SPR [Society for Psychical Research] material, plus a sickening outlook & style.[58]

Left to myself, I should suspect that Professor James had once been in contact with an elemental, & built most of his stories on that. Most of his stories analyse down to a horrible, sub-human, non-natural thing evoked by bad people, who do or do not escape them. This, plus faultless style, invention & learning, make him a great master. I should like to know what gave him his root-idea.

I feel like Florence Nightingale must have felt, cf. [Lytton] Strachey['s account of Florence Nightingale in his *Eminent Victorians (1918)*], when she got to Scutari, that what was wanted was not so much this system or that, but the barest necessities of civilised life.[59] So here, it is not this religion or that, but the barest rough sketch of the virtues, for any conception of Virtue, *virtus*, instead of the universal cynical-sentimental denial.[60]

Writers are also begining to deal with the changing of the time-sense: Lawrence, Kipling, Wells, Forster ("Celestial Omnibus" [(1911)]).

[57] Edward Frederic Benson (1867–1940), British writer. Now best known for his Mappa Lucia novels but also interested in the supernatural.

[58] Violet Tweedale (1862–1936), British spiritualist and writer. Member of the Society for Psychical Research. Perhaps her best-known book is *Ghosts I Have Seen and Other Psychic Experiences* (1919).

[59] Lytton Strachey (1880–1932), British critic and biographer. Part of the Bloomsbury group. Conscientious Objector during the war when Butts may have first met him. Lifelong influence on Butts.

[60] For virtus, see Glossary.

[Algernon] Blackwood never pleases me.[61] His experience is true, but it has never once rested on "the rapture of the intellect at the approach of the fact" [Emerson, "The Poet"]. It is all windy; in the air; because we haven't yet the words, the logic, to make his images & intentions stand on their feet. As for example, Professor James' stories would stand on their feet, if they were true.

The Thing is to get current stories into types.

The bad dead.

The good dead (rare).

Time & space breakings backwards & forwards.

Elementals (common).

The old gods & daimons—rather rare & usual bad.

The Glamis cycle. Something human & non human, living, which should be dead: Or dead & somehow alive.

The bad living 'putting the spot' on an enemy.

Savage deities with power (Metcalfe).

When I think of the nonsense, the vulgarity, the idiocy; the flashes of style, vision & faith: The sensation hunting, the perversions to suit prejudice. (Cf. May Sinclair's stories about the awfulness of male lust) superstition etc.

Mary [Reynolds] said: "The worst thing I know about the Surréalistes & their flirtings with Bolshevism is what Louis Aragon said to me about little Pierre de Massot.[62] I was tight & I asked him what they wanted with Pierre, poor boy; he said, with a look I shan't forget—'But he is our tool.'"

My endless debt to Gilbert Murray, in whose *Rise of the Greek Epic* I fish, as in a well fed by a fountain, even re-acquiring a word or so of Greek, working through his quotations with a L.S. [Liddell and Scott dictionary].

‡This time: Aidos & Nemesis, better understood even than before, in relation to my life, & to the state of our society, Sergey Maslenikof, Virgil Thomson & Achilles Set.[63] Our dark ages & migrations, U.S. in Europe. A control for my nervous

‡FOR THE BOOK [*Death of Felicity Taverner*]

[61] David Herbert Lawrence (1885–1930), British writer. Algernon Blackwood (1869–1951), British supernatural writer.

[62] Louis Aragon (1897–1982), French writer, one of the founders of the Surrealist movement.

[63] For Nemesis, see Glossary.

passions & impatience, through frustration & hindrance likely to become almost a madness. Held in leash now a little more firmly by his description of the greek spirit, by Sophrosynê.

Was not love for Sergey based on Aidos, & the loyalty that held me, especially last summer, loyalty to that? Aidos growing to Paian.[64]

20 November 1927

Sunday evening, always a bad time. I am ashamed of myself: Taken too much opium dross. Not done enough work, played with the idea instead of getting down to it. Justly reproached by Mary [Reynolds].

Have not understood Virgil; perhaps have not wanted to understand him. He said, & it made me cry, that if I wasn't always thinking what he could or ought to do for me, we should get on better. Do I love him or want him, as he is? I wanted someone to be good to me. I should like to understand, but I'm too tired to care. But I was happy, when I thought he loved me. And I worked. He seems too hard & cold a man now. I know I am somewhere to blame; at least there is a bitter spirit in me I half encourage.

From tomorrow I will start again. Paint my face, be gentle & gay with my friends, discipline myself. Hope that light will come back.

Cocteau said: "Virgil, c'est un type qui n'a rien à faire, ce sont ces gens-là qui font les scènes . . . créent les difficultés—imaginent les pièges qui n'existent pas. [Virgil is a bloke who has nothing to do; it's those kind of people who create scenes . . . make up problems—believe in traps which don't exist.]"

Drawing he gave me, which began as a portrait of Titus, & ended as the truth about chess.[65] Darling.

Cocteau said too: "now they make liqueur bottle & sweet boxes artistic, we must make art like drink advertisements & boxes of sweets."

Outside the perfumes & the foods, sealing-wax is one of the best smells.

[64] The precise meaning of this sentence is unclear. Butts may be referring to the fact that her initial respect for Sergey's potential has developed into his capacity for inspiration. For Paian, see Glossary.

[65] Used as one of Cocteau's illustrations for the deluxe edition (100 copies) of *Armed with Madness* (1928).

A pleasant thing: the dentist took the gold crown he was putting into my mouth & drilled it with the whirring machine, while he held it in his hand. It was splendid to have it done outside me. I hope it hurt it.

Opium is dear, the supply uncertain, therefore people are reduced to re-corking the dross, distilling the once cooked dross, drinking it in coffee. Thus poisoning their insides, which moderate smoking would have affected very little. So much for restrictive legislation.

4 December 1927

[Feuchtwanger's] *The Ugly Duchess* [(trans. Muir, 1927)] affected me very much.[66] Made me afraid, draw comparisons. Should I compare his method with Merezhkovsky's? He sees from as an outsider, a Jew, & he leaves out several psychological links I should like stressed in her character changes, in her relations with the albino & her finale—why exactly did she go dead? And the compression of unfamiliar titles makes the book difficult at first reading. There might have been a definite political sketch.

The Russian has a harder job. We do know, still breathe even, something of the middle ages. I can hear critics say "Dio is a modern young woman—lady—cross between Lady Diana Manners & a première danseuse from the russian ballet. But what <u>is</u> one to do with a person known to have existed: a priestess: a woman of the ruling caste in a lost civilisation: an athlete: trained in a certain lost rites, possibly knowledge? She happened. Her reconstruction is a formidable job.[67]

There is a mystery: They came to dinner. Duff [Twysden]—la trésorière deshonorée & a little sweet cub of a boy, & the vicious old-young man, the doctor with a pinched bud of a mouth.[68] And, among other things, I was left afraid. Contact with Mary [Reynolds] upstairs steadied me, & I am now lying in bed, reading [Merezhkovsky's] *Akhnaton* [(trans. Duddington, 1927)] about Dio, who might be me, & eating figues from Cyprus, this year's harvest, in rush baskets, remembering love, John Rodker, the Jew & the King.

[66] Lion Feuchtwanger (1884–1958), Jewish German writer.

[67] Butts undertakes such a "formidable job" in her *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* (1935). See 11 March 1933.

[68] Dan Mahoney, the notorious Irish doctor, model for Djuna Barnes' character Matthew O'Connor in her novel *Nightwood*.

It is odd: I could never work up the slightest emotion about King David or the Angel Gabriel, but Apollo & Artemis stay the same "whom fair-haired Leto bore."

[On] 'faith.' Every good religious teacher has said that faith because eg. of heaven or hell, was worthless, that it was an act of adoration of an invisible good. Immediately you are in the permanent timeless world. Think of the faith that has mounted to all the Gods in all places & times. Two kinds, a sacrifice to Apollo & Artemis in order to get something—win the next battle etc. Obviously the good. Doesn't work in time. On the other hand, faith-adoration raised the earthly loveliest songs & houses to the Twins, "who fair-haired Leto bore." And the last good.

1927. Murder of Malin [Goldring]'s sister.[69] Death of Val [Goldsmith]'s wife [unidentified]. Virgil's unkindness to me & the little Goodwin boy. Sandy [Cecil]'s death [actually in December 1926]. Death of Odo [Cross]'s sister & brother.[70] Sergey 'chute' [fall] & recovery etc etc etc.[71] And God knows what piteous things & horrors, everywhere.

Read [Rudolf] Steiner [*Outline of Occult Science* (trans. Gysi, 1914)]: Oh God that truth or a bit of it should be ratéd [spoilt] by vile style. The most important of all enquiries side-tracked, made ineffective to the point of disgust by want of charm. The knight's move.

Long night, Walter [Shaw] here. Up at Jean Guérin's alone with him & Pierre de Massot. The fire. The [café] Sélect. The long walk home along the Rue de Grenelle, architectural Paris in profound sleep; a cold, black & white moon night.

[69] Malin Goldring's sister Stina was murdered by her husband, who then killed himself: "It was apparantly [sic] debts that made him do the deed." Bowen to Ford, 6 December 1927, in *The Correspondence of Ford Madox Ford and Stella Bowen,* ed. Stang and Cochran, 364.

[70] (Paul) Odo Cross, wealthy British writer. Cross and his British lover Peter Morris at this time are the dedicatees of Butts's *Armed with Madness.* Butts will see Cross again in Cornwall and at his home at Tidcombe, Wiltshire, in the 1930s.

[71] The following year Butts visits Sergey who has clearly had a mental breakdown and has been hospitalised somewhere on the outskirts of Paris. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 216. It may be that this "chute" in 1927 is a precursor. But see also 1928 note 57.

16 December 1927

Remember: Cocteau against the mirror, walking up & down the room. Beauty like an arrow that hurt, a true wound. Pierre's transparency of suffering. The letter from Virgil whose brutality was like an astringent.

YESTERDAY'S Great Thought
You can't be seduced when the bathroom is out of action.

Remember: in the night. It came in like a frieze, a design, 'half Hobbema's avenue.' That my life was not a failure. Points like trees or spires. Cuddy [Camilla] well: Sergey restored: one book written & another begun, conceived (half). Poetry improved. The Virgil adventure. Much loveliness seen. This has been your greatest year. And you complain! Opposed to this, I think it very likely that I may have to die—that I have lost. All on account of money. This is partly why the Virgil business hurt. He told me never to be anxious again. It was a lie. The luck's been against me. No money in advance from the books. No story in *The Dial*: nothing from France.[72]

24 December 1927

I believe I once read, at College, a work of Rudolf Steiner's. Not the one I have just finished, *Outline of Occult Science* (to which, en passant, I can say that I would almost prefer the old heaven, purgatory & hell: though the judgement is unjust. Anyhow I know what I mean.) At least his work was practically unknown to me. I was stumbling through the last chapter, & came among the arid, dogmatic, unpersuasive polysyllables, a paragraph about 'our' search being the search for the Sanc-Grail—Eliot—I.

It may be that the greatest advance in human thought was made when, one day, some stone-age savage said to himself "not hot sun, hot towel, hot stone, Hotness," & that the next advance will be when we see the physical reality of a concept. No one has seen heat at any time.

Note. One does give a more than usual validity to the thoughts which occur soon after waking, when the interior is tuned up with tea; & I have

[72] Although she describes it as "felicitous," Moore rejects Butts's story "The House-Party" apparently because the content with its reference to homosexuality is "out of harmony" with the conservative *Dial.* Moore to Butts, 2 November 1927. Moore papers.

always half believed them to come from more than the body's normal refreshment after sleep. Something leaves the body & goes wandering, now & then. Then, on the question of the soul's mysterious, sane, lovely refreshment after, among other things, the Dream. I should not be alive now, or only in a worthless state, if it was not for those things. In solitude & contemplation my nature is refreshed at some source. I know some of the rules, & that, literally, all that is of value in my life comes from there. Am often too lazy to keep them. Do not, try not, to whisper at the consequences of my own idleness.

Porche's *L'Amour Qui N'Ose Pas Dire Son Nom* [(1927)]. Good book, but what a title! Quand c'est l'amour soi-disant normale, qui presque n'ose pas dire son nom ces jours-ci! [When it's so-called normal love these days which dares not speak its name!]

A man learns the technique of analysis, but what he does in the laboratory depends on him, on his 'virtu' it was once called. If he is exceptionally gifted, he may make a discovery, extend the scope or introduce some principle of simplification into chemical research. Or he may blunder about & achieve no more than repetition, or a mess. Or he may blow himself up, take poison. Or by pure chance he may make some discovery he may rightly or wrongly explain. So with this research into things not visible to the eye. "There are first, second & third-rate mystics."

25 December 1927

T. S. Eliot, with his ear on some stops of english speech which have not been used before, the only writer of my quality, dislikes me & my work, I think. But what is interesting is that he is working on the Sanc-Grail, on its negative side, the Waste Land. Up to now, he has been before me with my titles. *The Sacred Wood*; *The Waste Land.*

Remember: the Man Ray film, more real, like what life is than any other I've seen.[73] Pipes in peace, walk along the Batignolles, walk home from the Boeuf. Tea opposite the fire on the divan, here [14 rue de Monttessuy].

[73] Man Ray's *Emak Bakia* (1927). For a description of the film see Arturo Schwartz, *Man Ray: the Rigour of Imagination* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977), 295–6. See also 19 January 1928.

Mary [Reynolds] & I hatched the idea: what to do with Virgil's photograph. Make a "romance capitonné" out of it (cartonné, I said at first, forgetting what Halicka called them).[74]

There will be spangles over the Lanvin suit, a Newdigate fringe under the chin. A pair of horns, 'cocu.' Other thoughts as they appear. Stylisation of a Complex?

Picked up Green['s *Short History of the English People*] to look up a point. Had forgotten what his historian's temper was, & found its Cromwell-Puritan bias. A paper fell out. I wondered what it was. It was stiff & I'd wanted a cutter for a french anthology, then a book-mark. And it was the S. Egliston poem—just the draft he [Cecil] had written, written there that day when we were both ill from dissipation & I from misery also because of Marie Beerbohm, & because I knew & would not know that the game was up.[75] I read it through: to the end: "for I might come there alive or dead & seek you."

Life-in-life-out-love, we are together again.

Phil Lasell said of him [Virgil]: "I know how he will end: a disagreeable, rather important old man. Director (probably) of the Music section at Harvard."

Eliot & my parallels, jealousies & disagreements. Strife—ever so polite & unexpressed.

I remember: twice when I passionately disagreed with his opinion, tried to admire & accept, for discipline, by influence of John Rodker, by snobbism.

I. When he said that the early Phoenix [Theatre] production of the *Duchess of Malfi* "had no artistic value or significance." I

[74] Alice Halicka (1895–1975), Polish artist. Friend of Surrealist artists in Paris where she was primarily a Cubist painter until the early 1920s when, after meeting Roger Fry, Duncan Grant, and Vanessa Bell in London, she wrote in 1924: "'I am forcing myself more and more to concentrate exclusively on the problems of form, colour and values *(valeurs)* in painting, without being pushed towards literature, anecdotes or popular prints, which are so much in fashion . . .' In 1924 she had her first exhibition of a collage series called Romances capitonnées, which included paper, material, feathers and bric-à-brac." Gill Perry, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 153.

[75] Marie Beerbohm, actress, niece of the British artist Max Beerbohm. Dead by 1932.

had been greatly moved (so John): we had had, at least, the play. A sentimental but passionate effort to get it across. I quite saw de la Condomine's idea in dying with his legs straight up. And the girl who played the Duchess was part inside her. Late Elizabethan last acts are usually bad, & that, not the players' fault. I cavilled too much. I & lots of people know our *Duchess of Malfi* now.

II. Essay in *The Sacred Wood* (my title!) on Gilbert Murray's translations of Euripides ["Euripides and Professor Murray"]. Again, worthless as art. I know the case against Murray: romanticism: additions, elaborations, even faking of the text. But in *The Bacchae* especially he made again a dead monument into a living almost contemporary writer. People read, argue, dream Euripides now. Brush up their Greek even. Shaw was more right when he spoke of "Professor Murray's version of *The Bacchae*, which has come upon the world with the freshness of a new masterpiece" (quote inexact).[76] Snort again. An incomparable pity. The translations he [Eliot] admires—fragments of H.D. who knows pretty well no Greek (cf. Ezra's great 'gaffe' when in the "Ode to Aphrodite" he gave the conventional doves for sparrows.)[77] Yet, for years I would be a snob with Eliot, who owe so much to Murray; who, has been a source of better work, perhaps, in me. In the end I couldn't be any more. Of course there is a lozange of bitter truth in tow. Greater severity, & in some respects more courage would have made Murray's work in itself immortal, valid. *The Rise of the Greek Epic* is, I think, anyhow. But he has broken ground for us, directed us. "Held a banner of sanity stark upright in a reeling world." And more. He can be forgiven a sort of Keatsian expansiveness in some of his chorus-versions, following as he does the traditional liberty of the rhapsodist.

These notes for remembrance.

[76] G. B. Shaw's "Epigraph" to his play *Major Barbara* (1907).

[77] The "Ode to Aphrodite" may be Sappho's, which does indeed have Aphrodite drawn by sparrows rather than doves—but Ezra Pound's "great gaffe" remains unidentified.

31 December 1927 [Paris to Antibes]

In the train.

I saw Cecil gold, black, a kind of shining. At least, whatever it is or means, the comfort of his presence came through & with it an explanation why, our story, which seems to John [Rodker] degraded, false, contemptible, at best all made-up, is the chief event of my life, & as continuous now as it was: more so: a kind of durée.

1928

3 January 1928 [Hôtel Antipolis, Antibes]

FOR A POEM (done).

Thoughts of a day spent practically on a blasted heath; wind & wet lanes clanged-through by a train & razor-rocks the Mediterranean roared over, life of surf, rain curtains descending, the mountains drawn across. Fine rain in the wind—threaded lanes, in among the sad, stripped lemon trees hung with yellow double ellipses, & small oranges pretending to be warm.

A gay thought or so in a Café, waiting for the team. George Slocombe said (huge peasant from my part of the world, model for Holbein, curl-buckled red beard), "if life were only one café after another it would not be so entirely bad/might be considerably worse."[1] For me a slight call to order, who have begun to pretend to despise them: because the first & the best & the last of them was killed in them; by them. He who could resist, had resisted, the East & the West, all pleasures of compromise & ambition, killed by a row of long-necked bright bottles in a bar without sirens: Heart-break House.

A rhythm threaded me, with the rain & the wind. Back with the ebony & emerald bird. I thought: If sport, aeroplanes, chess, opium, the Homeric question, politics, beds, bars, life are not touched by mysticism, 'bead after precious bead' strung on it: it is the play without Hamlet. And equally, if there is mysticism only, a point of it not saturated with the world, it is the Prince dangling in air or dead on a gallows to rot in an insane wind. A double impasse to

Heart-break House.[2]

Re-reading [Harrison's] *Themis*, one of my chief quarries. Have learned more about the Kouretes now, Heart-break House.[3] A quarry still, but how fast our interpretation begins to differ from victorian rationalism, is just beginning; when it comes in full, then there will be a spate. Ten, twenty, fifty years? Harrison's *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* [(1925)] chiefly interesting for its omissions. How did she get through the current opposition to women's education? What made her give up search

[1] George Slocombe (1894–1963), British author and journalist born and raised in Bristol. At this time he was chief foreign correspondent for *The Daily Herald.*

[2] For reference to Butts's poem "Heartbreak House," see 1927 note 25.

[3] For Kouretes, see Glossary.

"for the scientific proof of immortality"? Why was it once inspiring, & now death "una perpetua dormienda" [an everlasting sleep]?

One senses that there was some time in her life, a final step she would not take, that [Gilbert] Murray has taken.

5 January 1928

Sergey 2nd night with his sailor, got drunk, night spoiled, but as much psychologically as physically; came home cross, ashamed, tired, unmanageable, un-refreshed. Quo vadis? Comme je m'ennuis de cette paedérastie infructueuse. [How tired I am of this fruitless homosexuality.]

Questions on *Themis*.

I. If my pet theory that man's 'highest' or 'most magic' qualities have remained constant through history, i.e. for example that the impulse of mysticism, in high civilisations has remained constant, evoked but not dependent on religions; or, & this is more provable, that most formulae have produced the best art: then the orenda, wakonda, above all mana described—that which made the earth to the Stoics a live animal—is an example of the reality of the 'supernatural' world.[4] It is a case of taking one step further than Harrison. She assumes that the applications of a certain vision, a certain sensibility among the early Greeks & among savages—rain-making, cannibalism etc. were demonstrably, to people preparing to be no fools, false, the whole intention, except for its results by auto-suggestion, & its emergence into good government, Themis were false also: that there is nothing but the 'sub-conscious' & the 'forces of nature' to tap. But I do not think people would have been so long deceived. The translations of the intuitions, art, ritual & myth were, & are still too fruitful. The Kouretes started me off afresh.

"A bird, a feather & the plant kikuli are all one," say the Hinchol Indians. They are & they aren't. In the distinction how lie all human past & future.

We know now, pretty well, how they are different. 200 years measured research & God knows how many centuries more or less casual observation have settled that. When we exercise observation, in another form, another kind of seeing the other way round, we shall have some

[4] For Orenda and Wakonda, see Glossary.

chance of knowing what Is, come full circle, at a Delphi "not made with hands" [2 Corinthians, 5, 1].

6 January 1928

Want to talk, flirt, dance, run about; all the same am exceedingly happy, shamefacedly emotional before the scenic sensations, snow down the mountains, foothills in a kind of cloisonné, round the crystal moon, towers & tile-roofs of the old town, stars & sea ripple, a flounce drawn along the sands. Nature imitating Cézanne indeed! Imitating Homer & mid-XIXth century academicians.

It is like seeing the great petals of life all one flower: walking in sunlight, tempered a little by moon & stars.

Lovely words come back: "So he giveth his belovéd sleep. Life—love—peace" [Psalm 127].

A story: half a crew wanted to smuggle opium into Marseilles: the other half of the crew might have wanted to, but weren't on to it. The police wanted no opium smuggled into Marseilles, (except half the police were in with the sailors who wanted to). The other half of the police did not know that half of the sailors did not know enough to want to or not.

So the half of the sailors who wanted to, took the opium & tied it in rubber bags & let it out of the portholes by strings. This generally worked, while the police searched the ship previous to unloading. But some day one of the sailors, who wasn't in with the sailors who wanted to smuggle opium into Marseilles, nor one of the half of the sailors who hadn't got hold of the idea, told the police, & they went on board to poke their heads out of every porthole looking for strings. But the half of the sailors who knew what they wanted, managed to man every porthole & cut the strings. But the solitary sailor, who had by now almost inadvertently taken sides, told the police that strings had been cut at as many portholes as there were in the ship.

So the police sent down four divers in their suits to look at what had happened at the part of the bottom of the sea which is called Marseilles Harbour.

But two of the divers were in with the half of the sailors who knew what they wanted, & two were plain divers, part of the police who knew what they ought to want. And the four met at the bottom of the sea which is called Marseilles Harbour. Then all four found as many india-rubber

sponge-bags as there were portholes in the ship, full of opium. And two of them wanted to pick up the sponge bags & give them to the police to do what they like with. But the other two wanted to pick them up & give them to as many sailors as there were portholes in the ship. So they began to fight each other, & which two picked up the most opium in bags & gave it to which side, I do not know. But there is still a lot of policemen hunting it, & still a lot of opium about for them to find.[5]

Opposite my window at the neck of the promentory of the fort where Vauban's fortress stands, is our bordel. The only arts décoratifs house in the place, orange walls & blue shutters & pots.

On Virgil [Thomson]:
"And tastefully apparelled in the latest sporting wear
Will enjoy the sports of winter from the comfort of a chair!"

Notes on *Themis*: final scrutiny: it is strange, or rather there is something strange, that out of such a mass of almost magical learning, no 'wide' or 'deeper' conclusions have been drawn. One step further would have been a new way into mysticism, another door. Just somewhere, Miss Harrison stopped short, but her material is fertilising *via* & the swastik passages, Salmoneus, the great bird sanctus chapter. And the patent falsehood of her anti-olympianism (she seems to have a positive prejudice against the survival of the individual soul. What happened at Cambridge in the Gurney epoch?)[6] In any case, a great & lovely work of scholarship & love.

And how Harrison an old woman has stopped short at Bolshevism, Joyce & Freud. It seems as if I deliberately (?) imposed on myself the job of making my κονροσ κονροτεσ [kouros kouretes].[7]

And I wrote 'joy' for 'job.' Was it a pen slip?

The best art keeps forgotten ritual in. The ballet *The Midnight Sun*, when Massine enters, the sun on one hand the moon on the other. *The Train Bleu* [Nijinska—Milhaud—Laurens/Picasso (1924)], & [Anton]

[5] This idea for a story is clearly a pastiche of Gertrude Stein's style.

[6] Perhaps reference to Edmund Gurney (1847–88), one of the Cambridge fellows who founded the Society for Psychical Research.

[7] For Kouros and Kouretes, see Glossary. Butts's young men form the 'group' she calls the "Achilles Set." See note 2. These young men could fall from grace, e.g., Roy Martin, see 1 November 1927.

Dolin's three magic leaps. Le Beau Gosse [character created by Dolin] translate in our godless days—the Megistos Kouros, Boy-of-all-boys.[8] They "brought us out to life again."

FOR THE BOOK Interchapter, something about κορε [Korê] & κονροσ [kouros], years-in-years-out, durée?[9] This is too vague. The thing must be pulled hard together, a thread for the beads.

For a poem (done). My head these days is nothing but a pot of beads without a thread.[10]

14 January 1928 Curse.

Film. [Goncharov and Protazanov's] *The Death of Ivan the Terrible* [(1928)]. Kept my eyes shut over long stretches. Mercifully brutality overshot itself; in the end we laughed & didn't believe it.

Themis again & article in *The Observer* on the Berlin Stage—might part of the communist success be a rest to the individual by putting him back once more into group-totem life?

This is worth thinking into; over & under & round.

NB January 1928: End of a year of this book. Beginning of a new year. Anna Perenna it has been, whatever that means.[11] Emaintos, a year-in-year-out-year. All that there is in durée, time dipped in eternity.

Since Sandy [Cecil]'s death, ten years have been inlaid into me, or rather dip after dip into life where there are no years. More than the soil turned "as the ploughs go to & fro" [Sophocles, *Antigone*].

Some day we shall make a logic for this Einstein-in-the-heart, a science & a practice 'steered by Sophrosynê.'

Stronger than the living, the dead surround me, figures of men & gods & I hardly need to say '*distinguo*.'

All this temporarily, suddenly & violently disturbed by lack of cigarettes! I ended up in a spit of exasperated rage which spoiled the last page

[8] Anton Dolin (born Sydney Francis Patrick Chippendale Healey-Kay) (1904–83), British ballet dancer, introduced to Butts by Poppy Vanda in the 1910s. They became lifelong friends, see Anton Dolin, *Autobiography* (1960). For Megistos Kouros, see Glossary.

[9] For Korê and Kouros, see Glossary.

[10] Basis of Butts's 1928 poem "Waiting," cited in Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 184–5.

[11] For Anna Perenna, see Glossary.

& a quarter. Of all my faults the most inconvenient! (magical interruption? was I getting too near what is not said yet?) ‡

‡It was not. All went well.

15 January 1928

Last year's book began with Cecil's death. First page said: "Tony Gandarillas script best." Not what it said & the name is forgotten, the script good as lost at the de Malleissyes.'

And in the paper I read that the London floods had destroyed all or lots of old Conan Doyle's psychic records.[12]

I have observed this so often. It is odd.

Read Stanislas de Guaita [*Essais de Sciences Maudites*]. Most positive works of mysticism base themselves on the fact that 'progress' is—apart from all that is implied by a train—no progress.

Stanislas de Guaita has some idea of scientific method; but belonged to the unblest age before *The Golden Bough*.

On the other hand, we have not yet got the full content, let alone the implications out of *The Golden Bough*. I remember, before I was old enough fully to understand it, what happened to me, alone in the chestnut woods round the Lake of Nemi [in 1912]. That day. The sanctity of blue & gold & green. Like birds. Carry-on from childhood, before the book was written, Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*:

> the trees in whose dim shadow
> the ghostly priest dost reign
> the priest who slew the slayer
> and shall himself be slain.
> ["The Battle of Lake Regillus"][13]

I think my life since has been the poesis of that, 15 years ago.

I sometimes wonder if I shall have to die young because of these preoccupations of mine. Comparative study of the death-rates & qualities of such people would be interesting. Probably a question of "who the Gods love [die young]" [Menander, *Dis Exapaton/Fragments*]. And Yeats has stuck it out. Old AE, but we two are on the same side.

[12] Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930), Scottish writer. Although better known for his detective fiction, he had a long-term interest in spiritualism.

[13] This quotation is used by Sir James Frazer to open his *Golden Bough* although Butts learnt it as a child, see *The Crystal Cabinet,* 41.

As for Stanislas de Guaita he at least restates clearly what, however little we understand it, is, is like something that exists:

> Voila le point central de la grande synthèse magique. Invisible, ou rendu perceptible à l'oeil par la chaleur, la lumière, forme à double courant fluidique dont le mode de circulation, mathématiquement déterminable, peut-être influencé de qui en a résolu le calcul. Tel est l'agent suprème des oeuvres de magnétisme et de la théurgie . . . Connaître la loi des marées fluidiques et des courants universels, c'est—comme dit Eliphas—posséder le secret de la toute-puissance humaine: avoir, découvrir la formule pratique de l'incommunicable grand arcane.
>
> [Here is the central point of the great thesis of magic. Light which is invisible or rendered visible to the naked eye when heated, becomes a fluid form with a double current. This form can be influenced by anyone who can work out its mathematic equation. Such is the supreme agent of magnetism and theurgy . . . To know the law of the fluid tides and the universal currents, that—as Eliphas has said—is to possess the all-powerful human secret: to have, to discover the workable formula of the incommunicable grand arcanum.]

Now this is true: as I see it, the force working through our subconscious to our conscious & resulting, plus ou moins bien [more or less well]—in all the works of man whose characteristics are harmony, proportion, power, rhythm directed. In fact, all our significant acts.

16 January 1928

These notes just made, on a wet, soft mediterranean morning, steady wind & rain drive from the mountains, doubling a short sea back on itself, a little irritated; the rock & olive land a cup for wet.

Rarely in bad circumstances, has there been so much 'magic' about. As though my veins were charged with some fluid, delicious, a life-essence (independent of opium) a seeing-through into serenity, a tang of pure health.

My mind . . . full of the worst book ever written on a superb theme, Buchan's *The Dancing Floor* [(1926)], but as if it was illustrated, in a kind of lovely light.

Antibes this evening: clouds breaking, jade-blue snow on the hills, & the sea a stranger blue under iron-dark clouds than I have ever seen. Below the mountains which were distinct, a cloud trail along the foot-hills over Vence, miles of it, bright-white, stationary, silhouetted in plumes & tufts.

After dinner heard one of Sergey's discourses on russian history. Our Lady of Kazan—story of the Madonna, ikon of whom his mother had hung round his neck & he'd lost with the grand-duke Serge & a tapette in Constantinople. I said: "your bad luck began then, Sergey." He said: "Don't frighten me." But I made him listen: "that's how magic works. You lost your ikon, conductor of your mother's good magic, with & because of drink & fancy boys.[14] And it's those things which have also killed you. Until another woman, another 'Mary' if you like happened. Don't you see? 'Magic' works through natural things." I hope he did.

How like birds we are, flying in the dark.

[Letter to] Wishart as Douglas [Goldring] advised.[15]

19 January 1928

Villefranche is at its best: one roaring, sucking, mixed riot.

For the Book [Death of Felicity Taverner]

Outer & inner categories: two opposite facing mirrors, repetitions in perspective with their lamps diminishing for ever & ever into no final wall or definition, but into a small, starred mist. What happens inside these down the mirror halls? Question in [Lewis Carroll's] *Alice* which first started off my child's mind.

Butts sends the proofs of Imaginary Letters, *her epistolary narrative, illustrated by Cocteau, to Edward Titus whose press, At the Sign of the Black Manikin, publishes it at her expense in November 1928.*

[14] Butts incorporates this image into her novel, *Death of Felicity Taverner,* 309–10.

[15] Wishart & Co (owned by Ernest Wishart, with Cecil Rickword and then Edgell Rickword as editor) becomes Butts's main British publisher, starting with *Armed with Madness* (1928).

Montaigne quoted by Philippe [Lavastine]: "I do not describe being (l'être) but transit (passage)" ["On Repentance"].[16] Philippe said: "space is a way of managing time." I think something will come out of his 'Cinéma,' Leda is laying another blue egg. I see surrealism now, escapes from our categories—jumps into categories?—suspect that will depend on individual intelligence. Philippe's quarrel with the Man Ray film [*Emak Bakia*]—that it was a dictionary of the best words. True, but a jump out of category which found a category, not consciously perhaps; but the corridors, masks, trees, torn collars, casually-arriving car, mirror figures, bourgeois interiors seemed to me included in a relation. Philippe's categories a return to the naif, & deeply concerned with jeunes filles. A blue egg none the less, & the ideas of categories about set me off, blue eggs hatch simultaneously.

For the Book

At the centre a bad, rather illustrious old woman brings death about. Vivien, who must not be me, worn down, brittle in her glass world (lesbian-semi-woman friend?) But the old woman need not be conscious, just conscious of the vitality about to suck, young glories absorbed & reflected by her. Must not seem 'influenced by the problem of evil.' And it must not be too Gertrude Stein either [because] (i) unfair, (ii) injudicious, leading to scandal & (iii) I don't know her well enough.

Notes, on states of seeing, when 'there is magic about.' Invariably in my experience one of the states comes, objective or subjective illuminations, or mixed, is enjoyed, lived-in, & just as it arranges the perceptions of the exterior & interior world itself, one uses it, once it has passed, for one's own arrangements, for work. Judgements of the meanings of events etc. The body is refreshed with the mind. But sometimes when the state has passed, sometimes without the state, there is another one, which can seem like a reaction; but I believe is a borderland state between vision & normal life. A state of image-making, cinematographed into one another senselessly. Nervous debility goes with it, sense of uselessness, & sometimes intense, but not quite real fear.[17]

[16] Philippe Lavastine. Wealthy Frenchman, friend of Cocteau. Writing philosophical texts and experimenting in filmmaking at this time. Later a disciple of Gurdjieff and a Sanskrit scholar.

[17] Similar to Yeats' belief, whose account *The Trembling of the Veil* (1922) Butts reads later in the year:

Book gone well with a rush.

The core might be the Duff debacle, only I'm doubtful how to arrange it off the lines of [Hemingway's] *The Sun Also Rises* [(1926)].[18] It would do, & an accompaniment, a frieze, a décor of little queer boys. Walk about all day & think about it.

27 January 1928

Villefranche—Cocteau, Phil Lasell, Jean Desbordes [Cocteau's new lover].

Cocteau said that [his poem] 'L'Ange Heurtebise' [(1925)] is considered by many an obscene poem.

28 January 1928

John [Rodker] publishing edition of the *Malleus Maleficarum*.[19] Shall I wangle a copy?

Signature? answer to prayer? That the barman who knew Sandy [Cecil Maitland] should have been found by Douglas [Goldring] at Juan les Pins. Coincidence? We shall see—I hope, but it is at a long remove.

I wish I could write verses like Evoë in *Punch*.[20] The mixed scholarship & silliness please me beyond most things.

When a man writes any work of genius, or invents some creative action, is it not because some knowledge or power has come into his mind from beyond his mind? It is called up by an image, as I think; all my birds' adventures started when I hung a little saucer at one side of the cage, & at the other a bundle of hair & grass; but our images must be given to us, we cannot choose them deliberately. . . .

Does not all art come when a nature, that never ceases to judge itself, exhausts personal emotion in action or desire so completely that something impersonal, something that has nothing to do with action or desire, suddenly starts into its place, something which is as unforeseen, as completely organized, even as unique, as the images that pass before the mind between sleeping & waking.

Yeats, *The Trembling of the Veil,* 74–5, 207.

[18] Perhaps because she only arrived on the continent in late 1925, Butts is one of the few people not to be a model for a character in Hemingway's *The Sun also Rises* (1926): Duff Twysden: Brett Ashley; Glenway Wescott: Robert Prentiss; Harold Loeb: Robert Cohn; Kitty Cannell: Frances Clyne; Harold Stearns: Harvey Stone; Pat Guthrie: Mike Campbell; Hemingway himself: Jake Barnes; Ford Madox Ford and Stella Bowen: the Braddocks.

[19] Butts's interest in this book began years earlier, see 6 April 1920.

[20] Edmund Valpy "Evoe" Knox (1881–1971), British writer, journalist, and humorist. Editor of *Punch* from 1932–49.

Balzac's *Splendeurs et Misères*

A great opening: great pictures—lots of the mirror events too sketchy, not all solidly bolted.

But Lucien is "un de ces êtres plein de tendresse, du coeur et de lâcheté de caractère [one of those creatures who are full of tenderness, have a heart, and also a cowardly character]"—don't we know 'em! The intrigue is out of fashion, too much of a puzzle—almost Wilkie Collins. It tempts me a little, neater & more psychologically coloured. What I indicated in the cup intrigue & did not do well, left in air.[21]

Sequence in my life: *Ashe* thought of, written. A year's work at the beginning of my marriage. Shewn to Ford: turned down, when I was still very tired from doing it. Ford backed up by John. Tears that night at the cottage, & I remember the haystack in the rain, the unstrung iron cutter—a harrow?[22] The book hidden, shewn to Sandy [Maitland], recognised. Life began for me there. John trying to get round it ever since. Pure human unkindness & stupidity—a little jealousy, perhaps even with Ford. And I absurdly over-strained, over-sensitive & impatient.

But they put me back years these two, with a little help from Ezra [Pound]. I would like to stop fearing & disliking them a little for it. It has marked my mind.

6 February 1928

Aldous Huxley's *Two or Three Graces* [(1926)]

Blessed man; not a master of form or language—magic language—but clear, hard, witty, observant, pitiful, aseptic—like the sound wood of a Chippendale chair. Wise & just, the scene where Grace & Kingham part supremely well done, as much of the horror of it given as a man could give. I know just one step more of that awful worst, something that was in Grace's being & was murdered, temporarily, I hope, then. And there is his scientific touch & his wit "when I thought of my sterling qualities of heart & head." I finished it with the words ringing: "it's the truth; it's the truth; it's the truth."

Signatures: repeats significant or insignificant in the outside world of our special preoccupations.

[21] Reference to incident in recently completed novel, *Armed with Madness*, published in June 1928.

[22] See 29 December 1919.

[From draft of Letter] for H. G. [Wells], "that though I have not seen him for years, by his books he has been part of my life continuously, as though we often met."

What does Wells miss? Of course he can't visualise a new type of man who hasn't been born yet, especially as that type will depend probably upon a 4th dimensional perception & what that will imply. What???

And he misses this in human life: that some qualities do not depend on physical or moral development. Homer stays good & Egyptian sculpture. Other things we learn to do better later, not those. I believe there is a problem, allied to mysticism, here. I'm always saying this. Can't one get further? It is the exclusion of mysticism that lets one down. Each book is full of events which have their mystical side, & every aspect is examined of them but that. Which will soon be the only side left to examine, or the sole light to illustrate all sides.

The world wants its best things without paying for them; best things out of Jean Cocteau, best things out of me.

He said: that just as when he drew me, he made the pleasantest, most gracious thing of me he could, so there were people about whose life it was to do the opposite "dessiner les traits les plus laids [to draw/show the ugliest features/lines]," especially of him—(idiotic review of *Opera* [(1927)]) distort everything to ugliness & evil! This in such exquisite french it was like short prose song.

12 February 1928 [Antibes]

Remember: light clusters on the battleships out on the silk-black Villefranche harbour. Another sunset over the Estoural.

That it was good, the undressing, fresh pyjamas, here in bed within sound of the sea. . . . here in the Mairie [Town Hall] wall is the stone to Septentrion, twelve years old, who danced twice in the theatre at Antibes & who pleased.

The Septentrion stone is inside [my mind] now, 7 feathers cut in the stone over the inscription: *D. M. Pueri Septembrionis anno XII qui Antipoli in Theatro biduo saltavit et placuit*.[23]

[23] "Touchstone" and motif for Butts and friends during this period. See Introduction.

In mid-February Butts moves from Antibes, "the Buddha in one arm, the gourd-rattle in the other" [journal entry], to the Hôtel de la Colline in Villefranche, where she revises the American proofs of her novel Armed with Madness *for Albert and Charles Boni.*

Glad to be back here at the Colline, in the dawn-room where I wrote *Armed with Madness*. Tired like after a illness. Reading Synge's *Aran Islands* [(1907)].

No thoughts come to me that seem worth writing, or if written, to be written well. There is only the discipline to make a note or two.

'Quotes' help, tranquillise me. Such as: "the world has got to see how many trials, catastrophes & re-births lie before the peoples who are determined to discover the ultimate secret of human liberty."

Finished [E. F. Benson's] *The Image in the Sand* [(1905)]. As often—a bad book about a good—a true thing. Paddy, flat, deflated hands laid on such an affair.

It 'comes to me' over & over again that I might—I should?—work now with a medium. Old enough, steady & instructed enough.

Last night, Mardi Gras, at Nice with Gabriel Atkin.*[24] There may be something left there still . . . need to do <u>something</u>, not just keep himself alive. And a good intelligence, like Tommy Earp's. Fun & suffering, touch of madness.

Cocteau talked about poetry: how he had learned watching a plumb-line on board ship. He resaid Emerson's argument—how "Le Cap de la Bonne Espérance," reproached for not being a 'love' poem, was a "poème d'amour pur, c'est à dire l'amour transformé en autre chose [a poem of pure love, in other words love transformed into something else]." How all achieved art is like that: complete assimilation, reborn as something else.

I said, "write a roman on Villefranche." He considered it & said: "non, poésie ou mémoires, transformation complète or data. J'ai aucun

[24] Butts's first mention of her future husband, the British artist, Gabriel Atkin. See his biographical outline.

sense du pittoresque [no, it has to be poetry or reminiscences, complete transformation or data. I have no sense of the picturesque]." He is right. Later he said that a woman could do it well. I didn't quite get why.

Is this true, o eternal preoccupation "that our air is disturbed, as Mallarmé said, by the trembling of the veil of the temple, or that our whole age is seeking to bring forth a sacred book? Some of us thought that book near towards the end of the last century, but the tide sank again" [Yeats, *The Trembling of the Veil*].

Sortes [Virgilianae]: Blake's drawing from Blair's grave, the soul regretfully leaving the body.[25] Sense of the future suddenly calm ahead. The poetry-toy, its formal patterns multiplying in my head.

Need, which should be satisfied, of a 'Lady Gregory' to take care of me, a place where I could live in peace.[26]

Yeats speaks about the failure now of Emerson & Whitman for us (more of Whitman for me), "because they lacked the vision of evil."[27] And so Joyce, for lack of the vision of good, as Phil [Lasell?] said, putting his finger on it.

They did experiments in thought transference, one giving the symbol & the other getting the vision that are worth Richet's attention.[28]

[Yeats] says, & I think it is so, that our materialisation has fallen on us like a disease; we are bound to suffer the discomforts of its illusion.

I belong to the war-ruined generation; those years lie like a fog on my spirit, mud, slough of despair, cynicism, panic. I have very little to say for myself. *The Trembling of the Veil* came my way: now curtains thick as clay-packed sacking.

I wonder if he will make me hate science, all that approach, & everything that is popularised by Mr H. G. Wells? Would it be a deliverance, jump out of prison? Into what?

[25] Actually entitled *The Soul Hovering over the Body Reluctantly Parting with Life,* this is an engraving by Sciavonetti from a set of drawings by Blake for Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1808).

[26] Lady Augusta Gregory (1852–1932), Anglo-Irish writer and translator, one of Yeats' patrons and a central figure in the Irish literary renaissance.

[27] Walt(er) Whitman (1819–92), American poet.

[28] Charles Richet (1850–1935), French physiologist and parapsychologist.

Jean said "Glenway est en erreur. Il veut créer ordre du désordre. C'est le contraire qu'il faut faire [Glenway is wrong. He wants to create order out of disorder. The opposite is what has to be done]." I see. (Apropos of some superb Jazz disks.)

He said: "Ca vaut la peine d'avoir écrit car quelque chose en ce que j'ai écrit m'a trouvé Jean Desbordes." I said, "dear Jean, wish a Jean Desbordes for me."

Remember: Cocteau in bed; white light in a white room through blue shutters. Jean Desbordes & he in pyjamas blue like the dress of the Virgin. Black hair & white face & red mouth, a spirit just awake & wild with joy.

Gabriel Atkin, a Sandy [Maitland] repeat. Hence a wish to help him.

An american writer said well that we love people two ways; for what they are & for what they might become: & that when they stay at something less than they might be, we can only love them half time. And love on half time is a source of much miseries & false expressions. [Struthers Burt, *The Delectable Mountains* (1927).]

This should be turned into a maxim!

Glenway said, about Joyce: that he was too literary, not content with the language given him, not content with the life given him, morning air & things: hence part of *Ulysses* & the post-*Ulysses* work.

5 March 1928

Cabala [(1926)] by Thornton Wilder: best book out of young America. Salutations (all but the last pages, where no language excuses the 'poverty' of the ghost, rhetoric &) no, time to stop cavilling.

Have I anything to remember? Yes: the sense of the book beginning to live; & of myself capable of giving it life, & so glad of my lot. Also [Gilbert Murray's] *Classical Tradition in Poetry* [(1927)], chapter on metre—the book new, & food like the sacrament.[29]

New Book: Pattern, falling into place & names . . . Mystery of the cup, . . . THE BOOK OPENS OUT NOW FROM PEOPLE'S REACTIONS TO ITS PRESENCE & ITS MEMORY. ‡

‡Use Freud.

[29] Butts drafts a letter of appreciation to Gilbert Murray, 13 March 1928. It is unclear whether it was ever sent.

15 March 1928

Remember Rolfe, now dead, & the *Tales Toto told me*.[30] Memory of Cecil. Gabriel Atkin, there is a pattern somewhere about.

What is Art?

I said once to Lett [Haines] that the business of art is to tell the truth. What did I mean? I suppose that by lighting up our imaginations it made us aware of reality by further means than by the ordinary exercises of our senses; that it retuned those senses to a higher pitch. How far would Aristotle pass this? It certainly seems to have this effect. Shelley got it all in: "Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity to [sic] man" [*A Defence of Poetry*].

So far with Murray. (About once in two years a book turns up in our life like the *Classical Tradition in Poetry*.)

Question of Murray's own style. For all the lovely metric & occasionally happy "shine" and enrichment, it gets on my nerves. "Spouse" for husband; "tis"; slight archaisms, even second persons singular. I suppose the point is that they mark the common or garden english poetic diction & that he is not a good enough poet.

Contrast [William] Morris' hexameters, & Swinburne's.

"By his brightness unforgotten, I charge thee deliver my life" [Morris, "The Story of Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs"].

Then:

"I have lived long enough, having seen one thing, that Love hath an end." [Swinburne, "Hymn to Proserpine"]

(not afraid of punctuation). The difference is between a Margaret Morris dancer, waving a scarf, & the rush of warriors in [the ballet russe] *Prince Igor*. That says it all.

Remember: Gabriel's love tonight, a present from the gods after Sergey Sergeyevitch. . . . He is witty, or is this funny? Question: "Have you been making love lately, Gabriel?" Answer: "No, I seem to have reached the age when self-abuse is no recommendation."

[30] Frederick William Rolfe (Baron Corvo) (1860–1913), British writer. Butts becomes friends with his biographer, A. J. A. Symons. In the 1930s Butts, Atkins, and Symons discuss writing a play based on Rolfe. It does not materialise.

Journal of the Book [Death of Felicity Taverner]

Seen at last that the 'clou' is the possession of the equivocal, silent cup of any possible or impossible history, by Vivien, a magic saturated woman, not far off her death. They will probably kill her for its possession (not a murder!).

'They' are part of the earlier band [from *Armed with Madness*] with additions. . . . In general, it will be a disturbance produced in a variety of people by the reminder of the existence of the conception of the thing. Awe gone & faith & love they will be left with superstition, fear of the uncanny, taboo.[31]

17–18 March 1928

Phil Lasell. The first 'conversion' I have seen, touched with religious mania.[32]

Kit [Wood] stayed on alone in Paris & has tried to kill himself.[33] What will Tony [de Gandarillas] do now?

[Rereading Shakespeare alongside Murray's] *Classical Tradition in Poetry*:

So many of Shakespeare's tragic closes deserve comparison with the greek. There is resolution, a carrying on of normal life again after abnormal stress, rather than resignation—more life.

Macbeth: I come back like a child to it. One has not noted one hundredth's part of the relations. The play is infinite.

Francis Rose can be funny: Sergey knocked him down poor lad over the necklace—a sequence so miserable I can't write it out.[34]

[31] At this stage, the book is still not recognisably the *Death of Felicity Taverner.* Instead it is a kind of transitional narrative, still grail-based, as Butts works towards this novel.

[32] For different account of this as Lasell's drug-produced madness, see Wescott to Lynes, 21 March [28], Wescott papers.

[33] Christopher (Kit) Wood (1901–1930), British naif artist. Tony de Gandarillas' "curio, protégé and lover." Sebastian Faulks, *The Fatal Englishman: Three Short Lives* (London: Hutchinson, 1996), 11. Roger Fry is one of the first to recognise his talent. In 1926 Wood falls in love with Jeanne Bourgoint. Commits suicide in England in 1930. Butts writes a tribute to him, see 14 June 1931.

[34] Francis Rose (1909–1979), British aristocrat and painter, introduced to Butts by Sergey Maslenikof. Pohorilenko quotes letters from Butts to Lynes revealing her

End March 1928

The Book 25,000 words written.

CUT. POLISH. SHARPEN. Let incidents run through in their setting. Cut comments.

Francis [Rose] on the unseen world. This is a very remarkable young man. Experiences current with my own, seen ignorantly & passionately. Yet, there's a mind there, & great sweetness to me. A perfume of goodness.

[Butts translates some Cocteau poems.]
The best of these sent to Jean. Nous verrons. [We'll see.]
Nothing. Well, well.

A flying day, wind, dust, flowers, trees tearing along, the sun with them & two old coasting ships bouncing at their anchors.

Things past redress may be "now for me past care" [Shakespeare, *Richard II*]. But not, thank God, past curiosity.

18 April 1928

Walk with Francis to Orvula by the Moyenne Corniche. "Peace comes by strange ways."

"Or if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her" [Milton, *Comus*].
Profoundly happy.

Incidentally, if I'm to be a director of souls, & the role seems to come more & more my way, I wish I knew more technical psychology.

[From draft of letter to her Westfield College teacher, Miss Phillpotts:]

As an old Westfield student 1911–1912, I venture to write to express my admiration of your *Elder Edda*.[35] I saw it mentioned in Murray's

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dislike of Rose. *When We Were Three,* 61. She does not allude to this in her journal—on the contrary: see note 37.

[35] Dame Bertha Surtees Phillpotts, *The Elder Edda and Ancient Scandinavian Drama* (1920). The *Elder* or *Poetic Edda* was also known as *Saemund's Edda.* See 9 May 1928.

Classical Tradition in Poetry, & am finding it a most excellent change from Riviera life. Your book is really too advanced for me, such studies as I have made have been classical. I know the stories, the mythology & historical position in outline. Some I learned as a child are part of my imaginative make-up.

19 April 1928

Exquisite pleasure, dressing with the proper tools again, creams, essences, sticks of orange wood, frozen scent, orange-down puffs, canary sponges. J'y reviens.

Benson. E. F. New book of ghost stories [*Spook Stories* (1928)]. Halfway between 'scientific' studies of the possible & Professor [M. R.] James' objectivity or the man who wrote *The Smoking Leg* [Metcalfe]. He does not seem to me to play quite fair. You can believe his beginnings, & not his ends.

CORSICA [visited with Francis Rose][36]

Journey: Scotland, except for more flowers & tall white heather in their shrubs—pure northern Europe. Blessed change after the Midi's glaring rock, olive & stone pines. (O Ingratitude!)

The sea going—a peculiar hard indigo-lapis laced with white reflections. A floor.

Ajaccio—Napoleon's house, a memory of power in the room by the bed where he was born, a peculiar sense that on that worn green satin couch a tremendous force had come crying into the world.

The country is a mountain range rising out of the sea, coloured bright blue. I never saw a bluer world. Clean, airy, untouched, blue hills out the blue Mediterranean. All the blues. The Gods keep it so. A place which if you were born in you would love above human beings. Very courteous. Seen from the sea, the west coast returning & being told "there Paradise begins," one could believe it.

[36] Although unmentioned by Butts, Wheeler and Lynes also go to Corsica at this time. They all meet up on the return ferry to Villefranche; Lynes, particularly, does not like Rose. See Pohorilenko, *When We Were Three*, 60–1.

Mireille Havet.* Why does that woman make my hackles rise? Like a well-bred fox terrier & I'd do a lot to avoid her; but went.

Scheme for Francis Rose
Reading & Writing.[37]

2 May 1928

Shall I try an explanation which I believe is more than pseudo-scientific: on the physical link between the seen world & unseen, the 3rd & the 4th? How we are, once hunger & fatigue & physical sex are satisfied, refreshed, made over, made new by harmonies that strike the senses & the imagination direct. Music, or the sight of somebody loved. That there is another way, between say Beethoven & a good meal, the contact of bodies—sex apart—between 2 people who love each other, interchange of some fluid, which is a medium between the 4th & the 3rd. (Rules of the game & we didn't make them.)

Mireille Havet visit:[38] Well-bred fox terrier of a young french rip. Best 'goose' I've stuck in years. Polished steel wits. I am going to like her. I like these people with bright open passions (They suffer for them too.) Within limits there are very few things she would not understand. . . . Visit had a touch of 'signature' about it.

What about a book of Essays on the Contemporary Scene? GETTING DONE.

Some day I shall make my own prosody notebook, working guide for young poets. For Francis Rose. If he wants to write poetry he must know the rules & observe the game before he can play it.

Essays??? What do I think about the world?

[37] Obviously successful as Rose wrote that "Mary Butts . . . managed to teach me a great deal about English poetry. . . . Many evenings were spent in her room reading aloud Shelley and Keats and translating some works by Cocteau. I owe a great deal to Mary Butts. She taught me to find delight in the sound of English words and to see poetic resonances in a Blake-like way." Francis Rose, *Saying Life,* 58.

[38] Mireille Havet, journal entry 2 May 1928. Fonds Mireille Havet, Montpellier University.

I want to write like Aldous Huxley, & I don't know enough. ([Butts adds:] Now I do)

One on russian emigrés

One on small riviera town inhabitants. Of misfits in old age.

One on the sailor mania.

One on the world.

One on the old superstitions under new names (a leaf out of Huxley's book).

One on having no religion. (Done).

Average length—a Huxley essay 27 pages. 6–7,000 words. Lighter ones 4,000.[39]

9 May 1928

The book came, *Saemund's Edda*, & I know that a period of my life, begun as a child has run round a circle & opened out again.

When I was 7, I went to the old Sandecotes dayschool. A mistress read to us the *Heroes of Asgard*. Something awoke in me (At the same time or a little later, we started on *The Iliad*. Similar effect.)

It was as though I absorbed some essential food from that cosmogony. I never forgot a word of it. Absorbed soon after in the Greek, certain rhythms, words & concepts became my 'most magic.'

Then 16 years gap. Read Murray's *Classical Tradition of Poetry*. Another sequence, with its roots in the Greek. Who will give us a graph of life in its sequences?

Deep joy in ancient, timeless beauty [of *Saemund's Edda*]. It has always seemed 'older' to me than Homer 1500/2000 years before. Fear again, uneasiness stirring. A quality outside Homer. Not 'unwholesomeness.' Rubbish. The most heroic work that was ever written. But I am half afraid of the book! What in me has been touched off?

10 May 1928

There has been something in this three months' wait with its torments, I would not now have had differently. No more riots—we can't riot any more. No more moon-snatching, except at the genuine article which seems the most attainable.

[39] Final one forms the basis of *Traps for Unbelievers* (1932). "A Small Town" was completed but never published.

Is it the truth about people like me, that we can always have the stars to play with; it's the imitations we love & can't get?

The *Edda* calls a calm the "sea-rest," Would 'wave-rest' do? I am all too fretful these days with work I have not done, want to do, do not know if I shall do, can do.

Ezra Pound on the Paradiso (or rather quotations from what he quotes, where he is sincere, scholarly & a poet. He holds poetry to be written in & to produce in others the conditions of vision or ecstacy.) All that there is in my mind to say on the matter. Also that it, Mimesis or memory, is imitation of what we saw in that state—"And this is the recollection of those things which our souls saw in company with God—when looking down from above on that being which we now call being, & upwards toward the true being." [Plato,] *Phaedrus*. How many times have I known this, have not had faith enough to acknowledge this?

A Work: ["M. B. Oxon's"] *Cosmic Anatomy & the Structure of the Ego* [(1921) or egg, as Hugh Brook justly pointed out.‡[40] The usual mixture, skatings over the surface of the Egg unhatched. Good quote: "The craze for phallicism is as tiresome as Sun Myths & Golden Boughs. They are all true in their octave, & foolish when transferred to the wrong octave. . . . All our condescension in permitting the ancients (ie up to the Victorians) the use of poetic licence is entirely misplaced. All the things which a poet describes, if he is a real poet, are quite as real as brick walls & railway trains."

‡Negative as usual. We have not come yet to the positive. My job.

25–6 May 1928 Curious days

If the Cosmic Egg book is right, 'everything' is a light on everything else, variants on 'the one,' interchangeable terms, variants of each other. This is a concept which can be profoundly felt. 'Known,' a peace-giving thing, profoundly interesting, a quickening of all that passes.

Mirelle Havet. So that's begun. What fish is lying in the basket now? Not exactly afraid that I've committed myself because there is something inevitable about it.

[40] Little is known about Hugh Brook who stayed at the Welcome in the summer of 1928 where he was briefly the lover of George Platt Lynes. See Pohorilenko, *When We Were Three,* 61, 63.

Read [Geoffrey] Scott's *Portrait of Zélide* [(1925)]. Admirable. Tragic, witty, tender.[41]

As to alliance with Mireille. There are practical considerations. I've found her penniless, terribly doped. I think I should call her a virgin sacrificed to Paris.

Get Bainville's *History of France* [(trans. Gauss, 1926)]. Sedative comparison to Green on England in the too stimulating life here.

Yesterday. Odyssey with Mireille: in the fiacre: to the wine-shop: in the cellar: in the street. Dinner after: grey sea & moon clearing. Its edges becoming distinct. A triangle of cloud passed through, cut across.

Remember: Night with a live flower branch in my arms. Life being distilled into me. Mireille is a good talker & a good listener. A lesson in several ways for me. She is another study in 'the decline & fall of an old family': last of the Soyecourt's race. Not erudite at all, & her Catholicism a passion. We drink something of the other.

History of Coco Chanel, the peasant girl from the Auvergne who has become the first couturière of the world & the lover of princes.

31 May–1 June 1928

First at Mireille's—a lovely night—the balcony windows open over Nice & the sea, the authentic night-blue panel. It is as if the life & sap of France enters me with Mireille in my arms. . . . She was very beautiful in the night, without make-up—pale olive, black-eyed, dark-red mouth, all smooth.

June the Pines [Juan-les-Pins] in the Morning: found another of those books—[Agatha Christie's] *The Big Four* [(1927)]. Will my strands & knots ever make a respectable net?

Bainville's *History of France*. Excellent; but slightly comic: virtue & civilisation a pendant round the neck of France. The practical non-existence of other places. . . . but Bainville makes a good comparison between the feudal lords, the growth & finally the over-development of their powers with our present growth of capitalism, now threatened.

[41] Geoffrey Scott (1884–1929), British writer, architect, artist, esthetician, and editor. *The Portrait of Zélide* is the biographical account of Isabella Agneta Elisabeth van Tuyll van Serooskerken "Zélide" (1740–1805), Swiss novelist and feminist. It is often compared to the best of Lytton Strachey's biographies.

5 June 1928

Mireille 'ronde.' I know what I am for her, her first contact with 'l'étranger,' she needs to get out of her tight french classic formula. She is not the first frenchman but the first woman I have known well, & her 'shape' has value for me. It is being a good exchange. I think things will go well, because my feeling for her is based absolutely on affection, tenderness & interest in what she is & represents, can do & be. I am beginning to understand Catholicism, her kind & Jean's [Cocteau].

Remember: our dark blue nights & our dawns.

Mireille 'ronde': it appears to me often that France, especially Paris, makes some sort of holocaust-sacrifice of its loveliest & most gifted girls to an almost infernal Aphrodite. They are trained for nothing outside sex, the home & a little art. Mireille's life for a woman of her gifts a waste, a sacrifice to a dressed-ape painted animal eroticism, called l'Amour.

It seems also that in answering *The Little Review* questionnaire, I have come out into the open—for anyone capable of understanding—open as to my position in regard to world affairs.[42] This sounds bombastic; but there is a hunch about that power is coming my way.

Aldous Huxley: steel words: "We find that the ideals & philosophy of life now generally accepted are quite unlike the ideals & philosophy accepted at almost all other periods." . . . "The countless dead pass judgement . . . they are mad."

20 June 1928

Villefranche last moments

"The Community Blues":
"Oh boy
Join our mass-production misery-movement.
. . .

[42] In its final issue *The Little Review* printed the results of a Questionnaire sent to a number of its contributors (including H.D., Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams). Butts sent hers to Jane Heap and it was reprinted word for word. See Butts to Jane Heap, 27 May 1928, Little Review papers, Golda Meir Library. "Confessions & Interview," *The Little Review,* 7, 2 (May 1929), 21–2 is reprinted in *A Sacred Quest,* ed. Wagstaff, 126–8.

Why smile
When your friends have got those community blues?
Why smile
When you've nothing to gain & plenty to lose?"

A cadence here.

There is a book to be written on how our great men keep alive when they ought to be dead because of the unknown, unphysical refreshment which comes to them from their contact with what produces their work, what I like to call reality.

Butts returns to her flat at 14 rue de Monttessuy in Paris to the very positive critical reception of Armed with Madness.[43]

This a busy day or not? Wrote article, 500 words, long letter, Gabriel: business letter & corrected MS [*Imaginary Letters*]. Some notes & the Mongol Book digested [Crookshank, *The Mongol in our Midst: A Study of Man and his Three Faces* (1924)]. Curtains washed. This with the full housekeeping & a long call. Diminished opium, a large, quick cut.

Three or four years ago I said I would be a good short note as well as letter writer. That I've done. For years have wanted to improve on system of notation, to make the printed page convey more to the eye, some sort of psychological arrangement of word or type. Am beginning to see how to set a page, here & there in these notes.[44]

And I said I would be a writer, & I am.

[43] For information about the positive critical response to *Armed with Madness*, see Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 206–8. From a draft letter to her mother at this time Butts writes of the oblique relationship between auto/biography and fiction: "I would only like to point out that along with my old ones, my new book is neither a portrait of myself, nor except for certain minor characters, any of my friends. Your mistake, if I may say so, is a very elementary one & very common. The book is part of a gallery of portrait types of our age, the kind of people you meet about. None of the incidents ever happened & ST [Scylla Taverner, one of the protagonists] is no more me than she's you. I may say that I know my job too well for that . . ."

[44] Constraints of space make it impossible to provide in-depth information on Butts's intricate system of notation.

26 June 1928

Morning thoughts: At college & just after, during the war, novels by Oliver Onions & [Gilbert] Cannan were 'it.' We rushed to buy & discuss them. They were our new literature. Now (Cannan is mad, Onions writes nothing) they have no relation whatever to what is being done.[45] Old, faded & dull they seem: Literature has moved on to another plane. Curious.

Remember: in the Luxembourg, the Utrillo *Les Toits à Montmagny* [(1906)], the bird & flower pictures by Camille Roche. And the *Herakles* [(1909)] by Henri Bourdelle. A bit too much for our flopped generation, but it is not Herakles [Hercules], not at least Euripides' Herakles [in *Herakles Mainomenos*], the friend of Philoctetes.

3 July 1928

Things Go Well.

Awful Giraudoux play, *Siegfried* [(1928)], but one good character & one good line, Robinan who says: "Je ne sais pas, mais ma présence empêche les évènements historiques. [I don't know why, but my presence stops historic events from taking place.]"[46] I laughed.

Remember: Chanel's house in the Faubourg S. Honoré, the coromandel, the glass doors. Cocteau's room with the window on the floor, on to the emerald garden. The low bed covered with furs, the light. Comparison between the persons who make & sell the best clothes, the best poetry of our age.

Talk in train with Tony [Butts during their tour of the Loire Chateaux]. Cedric [Morris]'s painting. Animistic not humanistic. I know what Tony means: one would not be surprised if some of his places grew in the night. Magic on canvas, not miracle; kin to 'the ghosties' etc. From which

[45] Cannan was certified insane in 1924. Oliver Onions (1873–1961), British writer who had a sporadic career which revived after the Second World War (i.e., after Butts's own death) with historical novels.

[46] Jean Giraudoux (1882–1944), French novelist and playwright. His plays combine the grandeur of classical theatre and elements of the fantastic while exploring contemporary issues.

Tony said "Good Lord deliver us." As far from Claude's rapture & meditation & vision of eternal harmony as witchcraft from S. Theresa's contemplation. Not all the truth; but Claude is 'mad' & certainly not quite human, & closer to the earth than is canny.

The Ghost Essay[47]
To be done for Tony [Butts].
It is to be noticed that the best class of these assume the most: ie a story of a member of SPR [Society for Psychical Research] would pass as trustworthy is usually unconvincing, or simply dull, e.g. [Bulwer Lytton's] "Haunters & Haunted" & the wide, mystical commonsense assumptions of May Sinclair.

Reasons for detesting [Wyndham Lewis's] *The Childermass* [(1928)]: that it is incoherent, too long; vulgar; venemous; dull; raging; vicious; ugly. Ugly. Ugly (and to me fairly incomprehensible & stolen from Joyce on points of technique).

11 August 1928

Cecil's death. Yesterday was a long day, the essay on the supernatural finished, & other works down to the buying of a piece of chamois leather.

11–12 August 1928

Rearranging the books. How that gives to the room a new face.

Evening with Walter [Shaw]: we talked, bringing 'young America' up to date, what it's doing in the arts. They're a fair half dozen. Naturally we hung on the failures. Eugene MacCown his beauties, snobberies, meannesses. Finally Glenway [Wescott]—who is becoming more & more disagreeable, cold, angry, afraid & fishy.[48]

[47] Originally entitled "The Use of the Supernatural in Fiction," Butts apparently sends this essay to the Woolfs' Hogarth Press. From her brother's commiseration they seem not to have replied: "One can see that it isn't perhaps conventionally quite what the Hogarth habitually publish, but that absolutely fails to explain their rudeness in not acknowledging it." Tony Butts to *Mary Butts,* undated [Autumn 1928], Butts papers. The study forms the basis of her long study of supernatural literature, "Ghosties & Ghoulies," *The Bookman* (1933).

[48] Despite their coolness towards one another during the summer (principally over Wescott's disgust at Butts's excessive drug-taking with Cocteau and Havet, see

20 August 1928

FOR THE NEW NOVEL: Do something about an old commonplace book—like this, or others, hint from Professor [M. R.] James.

[7] September 1928

I had been talking about the virtuosity of Djuna Barnes' *Ryder* [(1928)], the lovely language & rhythm: consecrated to bawdy jokes, bottoms & 'pipi' etc. . . . I had said 'why use such lovely language about ignoble things. Never about fortitude or chastity or ΑΦροδιτε [Aphrodite]. [Walter said]: Because they don't believe in such things any more.

True.

During September Butts is in London, visiting friends including Nina Hamnett, as well as her new publisher Ernest Wishart.

Remember: Betty Montgomery's.* The House—green paint—apple-jade. Lady Caroline Lamb—her great aunt—magical loveliness—"weaving a shadowy loveliness out of the sorrows of old time."

Betty's contact with [M. R.] James, as good as his stories.

Visit to MS [Margaret Schleselmann?]. Horrible drive into Hertfordshire, autumn distilling in, rain-clouds, ugly, accentuated watery masses: the lovely-hideous fire-sun-cloud skirted trees.

27 September 1928

All the same, overdose of [M. R.] James or not, there have been 'signatures' about, not scattered but sewn thick.

4 October 1928 [14 Rue de Monttessuy, Paris]

M. Max Jacob—was it you sent me that present, Sandy [Cecil]?[49] A great evening.

The New Boeuf, gloriously beautiful, lit like some lovely 'futurist' stage, smoke veiled apple-jade, lights in oblong glass tokes, the electric

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also note 56), they are spending time together by November, see Pohorilenko, *When We Were Three*, 64.

[49] Max Jacob (1876–1944), Jewish French writer and painter.

wires & boxes shewn in a corner, scarlet, sea-blue, gold, crimson-purple—mirror upon mirror upon mirror, even the doors disguised in looking-glass—(cf. Chanel's house). A good dancing floor, the bar high on the right up black steps.

But, where is the little side bar for the family-party? Where the comfortable shabby old beauties? Where is the Boeuf that was our party-place? It was beautifully decorated, none the worse for being a little old & worn.

And, people come out of the street disappear in it, a sea of black bodies & grey faces, all alike. It was difficult to recognise one's nearest & dearest, all colour stripped off them: quite too tenebrous. We may be a bad crowd, but why reduce us to what we shall all look like when we've been dead a bit? I painted my face like a Petruchka doll & carried myself straight up & I was only one degree less spectral.

Our Boeuf is dead.

Virgil Thomson outside the Deux Magots [café], worn & fierce & rather wretched-looking—& a bit mad, I thought. I can't do anything more for him.

[. . .] almost damn style in Virginia Woolf's *Common Reader* [(1925)], where exquisite sentences float by round no single concept, or group of concepts.

I am becoming more & more sensitive to the quality of paper that I touch. Certain note-papers—the new buff block with the scarlet address I dislike though it looks well once the ink is dried to black; but my paper-cutter isn't sharp enough. It 'chiffons' out the margins of the new Strachey [*Elizabeth and Essex: A Tragic History* (1928)].[50] This paper is supportable but I like best the thick transparent cheap india block—one might be writing upon vegetable glass. This has a relation with my childhood's nervous—almost sickening—pain at the idea of running my nails along a soft whitewashed wall. The sensation returns to me now.

If Christ had died at a ripe old age, universally loved & adored, his doctrine developed, the disciplined well-trained & powerful Christianity would doubtless be better—but would there be any Christianity?

[50] Butts must be reading an advance copy—it was not published until December.

The Passion has a terrible beauty still. These are as I see it: defeat of youth, so horrible, so awful; its universality, the summing up of the mysteries, the young god-man on the holy earth-tree; the 'thrill' also, God help us, of the torture, the sensual shame & pain, the mocking, in particular the scourging—shame added—the god has to be 'ragged' & whipped.

20 October 1928 [Chartres]

[With Walter Shaw.] Here again after four years. It is a dark, a black town. That part of the church remains a different, a strange magic. Because, I see now, of the earlier sequence dreams when I was a child. It is built above the pre-christian magic well—'les eaux forts.'

Back in Paris by the end of October, Butts reflects on her new novel, Death of Felicity Taverner*:*

I am beginning to see more clearly into a subject which has long interested me: e.g. 'evil magic' evoked by Machen & other writers. He defines it as the religion of the pre-Aryan peoples of Europe. Now largely thanks to [Louis Bromfield's] *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* [(1928)] (a book I can hardly praise too highly, & which has put me on my mettle) & a visit to Chartres, I seem to see a little further.[51] What was their faith?

Well, (pre-aryan may or may not be disputed) what was it?

Have I read *Prolegomena* & *Themis* for nothing all these years?

Glenway's book superb writing.[52] What is lacking—a coherence, & a love that is warm & swift & tender; not 'metaphysical' or 'in air.' . . . no

[51] Louis Bromfield (1896–1956), American writer and music and drama critic. His work reflects a profound distrust of what he saw as the dehumanising effects of industrialism and materialism in twentieth-century American life. *The Strange Case of Annie Spragg* analyses twelve unusual characters in relation to the death of a spinster.

[52] See Butts's review of *Good-bye Wisconsin* in "Mr Wescott's Third Book," *The Dial,* 82 (May 1929), 424–7 and Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 221–2. Butts had delighted in Wescott's previous novel, *The Grandmothers* (1927), which had made him a celebrity in America. See Pohorilenko, *When We Were Three,* 58. She wrote to Wescott: "My dear: Only to say that the chapter about Alwyn's mother's courtship is worthy of more than I could ever say. The most truthful, the most magical, most moving, most delicate, most perfect. . . . My dear, *The Grandmothers* is in proper progress from *The*

sense of humour i.e. english humour as shewn in James, William or Henry. Compare *Annie Spragg* &, I suppose, [Thornton Wilder's] *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* [(1927)].[53] The work of a superb mind that has not yet made up its mind about anything.

[Writing] Essay, "L'Inconnu"—our old American at Antibes . . . walked straight out of Henry James, the gentleness.[54]

What did I see under the lamp at the cross-roads? "Septentrion placuit"—might be the 'clou.'[55]

4 November 1928

New story—written itself—to have been an essay, "L'Inconnu."

Remember: exquisite fatigue & rest after the '[heroin] shot,' illuminated repose, eyes shut, a moment, a minute before I am writing this.[56]

Jean Cocteau: "les Américains ne rient jamais! [Americans never laugh!]" Not in Glenway's books! And even the bats "like small hands without wrists," his owls "with beaks like curved scissors" are lost.

No friendliness between man & plant & beast, only exquisite observation.

Apple of the Eye [(1924)]. . . . I can't say anything right, but lots of young women from my country will never have known what they were themselves until they have read it. I hardly did." Butts to Wescott, undated [spring 1927], Wescott papers.

[53] Thornton Niven Wilder (1897–1975), American playwright and novelist. His Pulitzer-prize winning *Bridge of San Luis Rey* is a complex study of the role of destiny or providence in the death of five travellers when the bridge near Lima, Peru, collapses in 1714.

[54] See 4 November 1928. Among Butts's papers there is an undated untitled three-page story about an American Homer Vandermeyer in France. This may well be the story referred to here as "L'Inconnu."

[55] For source of quotation see 12 February 1928. Amongst Butts's papers there is a five-page handwritten manuscript about Antibes entitled "Septentrion: Paris, Nov 1928."

[56] Butts's "Drug habit . . . had escalated from opium—which she shared with Cocteau—to heroin." Robert Medley, *Drawn from the Life,* 79. Eugene MacCown claimed that Havet was responsible for introducing Butts to new and different drug suppliers. Robert H. Byington, "Interview with . . . Eugene MacCown," in *A Sacred Quest,* ed. Wagstaff, 38.

13 November 1928

There is nothing for me but work, work, work.[57]
There is the new jade pen.
There is the disintoxication, well started.
There is *J'Adore* well continued.[58]

16 November 1928

Fairly ill, but ill or not re-reading Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. A book, now that each year, I know more, almost breathless with suggestion.

If her theory is right, & I have an idea that, substantially, it is, what is the relation between the Grail stories, summa of the classic & Christian mysteries & Machen's concept of the evil pre-Aryan European faith? (Shall I live long enough to give a clearer answer—one more authoritative?)[59]

19 November 1928

The 'Eos' book [Jeans, *Eos: or the Wider Aspects of Cosmogony* (1928)] on the radiation from the outer stars through space. Very interesting, but does it by chance give the astrologists a leg-up?

Like this: they said—since Egypt & Babylon—that the stars in their courses & especially the planets influenced men's lives, & Doctor Richard Garnett—in a book I've never come across—was the last man of our age to uphold it. Years after his death, the spectrum was invented to determine, not only the planets, but the composition of the farthest stars. From that we learn that <u>physically</u> we are perpetually saturated with star-energy, their matter decomposed and radiated off Betelgeuse, Aldebaran, the Bears, "Arcturus, Orion, Pleiades & the chambers of the South" [Job 9.9]. Their <u>matter</u> is saturating us. Well, what about it? [The Egyptians & the Babylonians] made an inspired, anthropomorphic guess at what was merely happening to our bodies. They didn't know what the stars were, how they came into being, how far off they were. Of their physical being

[57] Butts's lament comes in part from her grief over the previous day's arrest of Sergey Maslenikof for soliciting. He is given a three-month prison sentence.

[58] Butts is translating Jean Desbordes' *J'Adore* (1928). It is never published. See Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 212–4.

[59] For a reading of *Armed with Madness* as a positive interpretation of the Grail myth compared with Eliot's, see Jennifer Kroll, "Mary Butts's 'Unrest Cure' for *The Waste Land,*" *Twentieth Century Literature,* 45, 2 (Summer 1999), 159–173.

they were utterly ignorant; their knowledge of them was through wonder & admiration & awe & love. That is the point: their knowledge was not misunderstood physical knowledge, it was an "impact of wonder." Yet, what they said was true; only theirs was a spiritual permeation & contact, ours a physical. Both two sides of the same coin.

More will come out of this. (Even food for poor Mr. Joad's thinking people)—good, clean little study leading to a dry, bare, doorless wall. What are they to think about?[60]

There are no entries between the 20 November 1928 and June 1929. In November 1928 Butts continues a detoxification cure alongside Walter Shaw at her Paris flat where she is cared for principally by the British painter, Robert Medley.[61] *There is therefore no record of Butts's response to the publication that month of her epistolary narrative,* Imaginary Letters.

[60] Cyril Edwin Mitchison Joad (1891–1953), British academic and popular philosopher.

[61] Robert Medley (1905–1994), British painter, lover of the dancer Rupert Doone and great admirer of Butts's work. Although he is not mentioned by name in the journals, Medley and Butts were good friends in the 1920s and early 1930s. See Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 220–3.

1929

In January 1929 Butts travels to England, staying briefly at her mother's flat in London and then, between February and June 1929, renting a flat at 22 Clarges Street, London W1 (now demolished). The American writer Harcourt Wesson Bull, whom Butts had met the previous spring in Villefranche, found her the flat & describes the "Greek Party" she threw there for the Bright Young People in the spring of 1929.[1] *In March Butts travels to her native Dorset to arrange her daughter's schooling, writing to Rodker that the school "is the happiest place, in a pine-wood high up, looking out straight over Poole Harbour to the Purbeck Hills."*[2] *In April she travels to Bruges with Sergey Maslenikof, where she writes an essay on Aldous Huxley.*[3] *By June she is back in Paris, staying with Mireille Havet at 32 Rue de Raynouard, Passy, sixteenth arrondissement.*

[1] With regard to the Greek Party in London, see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 221.
[2] Butts to John Rodker, undated [March 1929], Butts papers.
[3] Butts, "Aldous Huxley," in *Scrutinies II*, ed. Edgell Rickword (London: Wishart, 1931), 73–98.

11 June 1929

This [last] 6 months, perhaps the hardest in my life, but tuned-up as usual with love, poetry, adventure.

[18] June 1929

Paris poetry: the night Mireille & I went to look for Elise [Planchon, Havet's maid] & I sat on the tenement stairs in the dark with the stair-tap dripping, & struck matches as the workmen came up & down in the dark & their dogs jumped over me.

Later, the rondeau in the night-chemist's shop.

I suppose also, my illness later, the snow in & out & about the Passy streets "too sad for song" [Shelley, "A Dirge"] & fear & the realisation of being alone.

These weeks at Mireille's are my first in an admittedly haunted house. Our haunt. 30 years ago, Passy was a village. Yesterday I went down the steps—hill-village steps—towards the river [Seine], & came out in the lane in front of the house & below it. I looked up at our house in which Mireille's flat lies. The garden—or half of it has been levelled to make a modern block of hideous flats, & our house stands now on a cliff, twice as high as seen from our Rue Raynouard with its line like the village lane it once was. I saw it, high & old & grey—'panelled' with grey shutters. But for no colour & no washing, it might have been a mediterranean tenement. And the look of it made me afraid—the same impression, without the awed beauty, of the pine-tree high above the low wood at Salterns, with the ivy & the huge cones & the blue sheen in its crest. Not quite the same—more 'ghostly' & as though I had seen it before.[4]

[G. M.] Trevelyan on war: "green earth forgets when there is neither historian or schoolmaster about to remind us" [*History of England*].

3 July 1929

The Courbet show [at the Louvre]: instructive, very. One admirable picture, the most imaginative one there, a sheep-flock running & one shepherd. Land deep blue at dusk melting into blue sky. A blurred line of running forms.

[4] For a description of the layout of Mireille Havet's flat—the building was demolished in 1932—see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 224.

Almost every kind of picture, including the two girls with parrots, almost the worst picture imaginable, though every gradation of virtuosity—flower pieces, exquisite but dead; not dutch-dead, 'enamelled eyes,' but faded with drooping.

7 July 1929 [14 rue de Monttessuy]

Tony [Butts] gone & life worse.

What I have done to the flat. There are: a new brown silk cushion, very large & soft; a ridiculous victorian reading lamp; glass bottles to hold the stones, tall with lids & one can see what is going on inside; a drawing by Tony & a map of Dorset, of Purbeck; 2 tall glasses for flowers; the floor waxed like glass; 6 glasses with black glass stands; a powder-box like a grey alabaster ball.

12 July 1929

2nd good evening, finding again my well-belovéd in Paris.

Last night Jean Bourgoint.[5]

Tonight, Walter [Shaw] & Jean Guérin—after four nights ago an all-night classic play, Boeuf [bar] & the Grand Ecart [bar in Montmartre].[6]

Jean Guérin draws poetry out of others; tho' the evening started none too well. They came late & quarrelsome, & Walter is not the man he was making himself.

Went back to their rooms off the Champs Elysées—walk out of the windows into tree-arms—the reality of our dance came back to me & I walked home in the hot, still shining night, very well pleased.

Burke on the French Revolution [*Reflections on the Revolution in France*]—a book where exactly one half of truth is so told as to delight in the rarest way the rarest minds forever.

I suspect myself an unconscious Godwinian, drunk with the perfectibility of man. Shelley's child rather. I begin to see further into that now.

[5] Jean Bourgoint (d.1966) and Jeanne Bourgoint (d.1929) were the models for Jean Cocteau's protagonists Paul and Elizabeth in his novel *Les Enfants Terribles* (1929), probably the first narrative to explore adolescent drug-taking.

[6] Like the Boeuf sur le Toit, this bar was named after a work by Cocteau. In this case his 1922 novel *Le Grand Ecart*.

Why does the strict matter of science seem to be so little direct use to art—or any use? Lucretius out of the way, there is Shelley, Burke if you don't admit him; but even prose leaves us little. Some of the best of Wells. Has it had time? [Gilbert] Murray's one half right when he talks about the old things, death & the lark that was worth the lark.

18 July 1929

T. S. Eliot: "One advantage of an orthodox religion . . . is that it puts morals in their proper place."

19 July 1929

Dinner with Lincoln Kirstein [editor of American little magazine *Hound & Horn*].[7] I like him.

A strange evening. All the afternoon thunder on into night, a cracking tumbling in the sky. Rain sheets, quieting into a dark, hot spray-loaded air; earth, air, trees, house, flesh & tree sweat everywhere distilled. Out in the odd corner café with Mireille before dinner. Then here alone, no lights. Two candles in a bottle, a lap full of history books, looking out into a pitch black street in the air's warm stream.

To be done, Lincoln Kirstein
He has poetry MS.
Write Charles Boni to send him new novel on arrival in N.Y.
Stories ready for when he comes back.
[Desbordes'] *J'Adore* [translation] for when he comes back.
[Cocteau's] *Orphée* [translation] rights for when he comes back.

21 July 1929

[Lord] Macaulay's *Letters* these days past please me. All that can be said against him, superficiality, partisanship is true. But—he remains admirable, clear, vivid, honest within his prejudices, generous, illuminating, though a barbed netting of his own & other people's ignorances & absurdities he charges straight through. Truth is often a series of targets,

[7] Lincoln Kirstein (1907–96) is probably now more famous as the American dance impressario, who with George Balanchine founded the School of American Ballet in 1933. He also established the New York City Ballet Company. He was a friend of George Platt Lynes and hence probably met Butts through Lynes, Wescott, and Wheeler.

placed one behind the other to infinity, & along a most subtle line. The first few of the series he hits.

When he is at his best, as in the Bacon Essay ("How about Mr Strachey & his debt to this Victorian?")—he gives a superb account of the most difficult of characters.[8]

The time is historically ripe for the first attack on Lytton Strachey. After the orgy of deserved praise, the orgy of half-deserved blame.

22 July 1929

Black, wet dark over Paris, a bath of black steam; fear pain, horror round the corner of the invisible-visible rain-sodden air.

26 July 1929

The mind can hardly stand steady, certainly not the mind of the prosodist, when he compares Shelley's metric with what went directly before him; his situation in general in the history of literature. From what earthly source did he hear those noises?

Cf. Byron as poet & as critic.

[Gilbert] Murray's *Ordeal of this Generation* [(1929)].

Murray is one of the last of the pure Victorians, & a writer immensely stimulating to any modern with enough knowledge & enough sense to follow his lead.

"Our most popular Hellenist," says T. S. Eliot [in "Euripides and Professor Murray," *The Sacred Wood* (1920)], unworthily sniffing. (Does he know half as much Greek?) Also, in some ways, 'au dessus de la mêlée' & his 'call to order' of great value & sanity, bar a prejudice or so, which piques me even & will undo half his influence: e.g. women's 'emancipation' makes him a little nervous, bless him!

His last book is not very important in itself, probably his least important. His best point is his insistence on our change of attitude with regard to war, that hardest of all changes. He calls our attention to Euripides—not always with real aesthetic justification. There, H.D. & he both shoot wide.

Yet honestly, to few men do I owe more, do I more bless in my heart than that old scholar & gentleman.

[8] Macaulay's essay on Bacon could be seen as a precursor to the debunking practised by Lytton Strachey in his *Eminent Victorians*.

The unbearable sadness of gay songs in these times. The rather exquisite [song] "Looking at You" dances through my head & is a gay torture.

From 'ideal' letter to Gilbert Murray:

The people I am with & care for are rarely writers; the νεοι πολοται [new citizens]—Oxford—Harvard—the Sorbonne—young Russia—the makings there of virtue itself, the heroic. And they are as in more deadly danger than the amiable good-intentioned, tractable diligent necessary second rate. They are young men & some women, who have forgotten the sacred game. Too often I've had to give some sort of last sacrament to the dying. (I mean exactly the war generation, my own, & the one just after.) What you know: what you keep alive in the world: Athens "in whom alone she lives again, is nursed & bred & brought up true" [Jonson, "An Elegy," *Underwoods*, XXII] would be their health.

27 July 1929

13 pages of notes, summary etc. today. That with letters, a morning's money chase, a long interview, some reading, 3 pages translation [of *J'Adore*] & Mireille. Not bad.

28 July 1929

The beginning & end of Bacon's work & greatness was this—that he changed the way in which we all think, when we are thinking at all.

I try & work at what I am learning, create my 'Organon' to convey not only what I have seen & half divined, but the exquisite subtlety of its mode of happening.[9] The nearest analogy is in chess the knight's move. More perhaps than a mere analogy. The implications of that motion of a piece of wood or ivory across a given number of squares & its effect on a given number of other carved pieces, different in name, shape & power, are to be extended over a number of events caused by man & nature, in infinite, not arbitrary relation. This has to be translated back into a number of γραμματα [letters], 'scratches' on paper, one of whose ends is to form the base of that "science of mysticism" J. W. N. Sullivan has considered possible. The problem is in part the artist's, to express an unknown in terms of the known.

[9] Butts is referring to Aristotle's *Organon*, a group of six treatises outlining his Science of Reasoning.

And so, my scratches, chiefly arbitrary, & some questionable by the weight of memories they drag with them, out of the lost eyes of the world & through our histories—will have to do.

1 August 1929

Lunched with Mireille. Came in. Picked up a volume of [William] Morris in mistake for the greek Anthology & read my sorrow there till I dared read no more.

I think in the end he should say of me: "God send every gentleman/ such hawks & hounds & such a leman" ["The Three Ravens," trad. Ballad].

How from my babyhood almost I have feared & loved that poem, as if it had been 'made' for me.

3 August 1929

For years & following the nature, perhaps the rules of this kind of thinking—I have wanted to put down certain obvious occurrences & ideas whose simplicity in the rush of events disguises them, withdraws them from observation.

If it is true that it is the simplicity of the Einsteinian formulae which constitutes their difficulty, that they are so obvious as to escape notice, it seems to me that this applies to events in life, numberless happenings, perhaps the basic ones, which we, saturated in detail & hurrying through subdivisions, lose sight of.

Quiet & meditation, we are told is necessary to real knowledge: this is taken for granted, its truth obvious once tested. Yet man has always avoided the test while admitting its unvarying results.

Also, if he should retire into meditation, he has preferred a given subject, with fixed 'données.'

Even these sentences have been hard to write. An observation I had made, an illustration of infinite simplicity has gone—lost. There remains a corollary from a simpler observation—the difference of man—as an emotional-intelligent being late at night & the following morning. Everyone has known this, "Philip drunk & Philip sober." This is worth further investigation.

And these simple 'awarenesses' vanish as dreams vanish & with less reason. I suspect that they come to the surface retranslated & adorned with detail, with excuses, with complications, in Art. It would seem that man is usually blind to the unadorned, basic events as they pass here. (It is

hard even to get words for what I mean)—they are everything that we call life: our forests. While the most we do, our proportions being so often that of ants—to be awed at the genius among us who is partially aware of one tree. (One tree presupposes, is, the microcosm of the forest? Yes & no.)

These remarks seem as near metaphysics as I have ever got! but there is some biological sense in them if it is true that some savages can only say "hot stone," "hot sun," "hot hand" & never envisage heat.[10]

We are the same organisms on a different rhythm at each division of the day.

Have found that I am old enough to read Bacon *Essays* & hear the mind speaking with awe, satisfaction & love.

[On] literature which evokes a specific state of awareness of another world & hidden forces in man.

Personal taste may play a large part here; but most critics would allow a difference in actual quality & kind of the emotion evoked before Piero della Francesca's *Resurrection* & Botticelli's *Spring*. The first is "glory to man in the highest" & perhaps the greatest picture in the world. But Botticelli's is the picture of no earthly spring.

Subject has really very little to do with it. [Spenser's] *The Faerie Queene* passes of this earth & never for a second leaves Elizabeth's court & the english green wood. Again Man is in excelsis. Then turn to a border ballad. There subject & evocation are often one; but even Shakespeare is no master of that trick. One doubts if he was interested.

Music I cannot speak for. The general result in letters is the more unearthly the machinery the more terre à terre the result. And in truth I shall never make my 'magic' anthology for want of material. Hogg in a long poem & his best one [*Kilmeny*], pulled off less than ten lines.

It has taken me all my life to fix the little of which I can be sure, arrive at such poor theorisings from them as I have. While I am haunted that they slip by me each day in millions. . . . while the evening gathers, perceptibly for the first time earlier; & the Paris night arrives to hang jewels over the bends of this river where man has decided that there shall be light, by preference coloured light, but light.

[10] See 24 December 1927.

CURIOUS THINGS

That roman courtesans used animal glands for aphrodisiacs & love philtres.

It would seem that the use of our 'dopes' is more ancient than I had supposed: that the heathen in their beastly devices used opium, hashish & others at all times.

In Greece there were immortal or divine names: Morpheus gave the poppy & an Egyptian gave Helen stuff to make her first parties go off well on her return from Troy.

Rosemary & Lavender were considered a pair, "as man to woman, as white rose to red." Grows to Christ's height.

7 August 1929

In Elizabeth's day you picked foxgloves in the hedges of the Reading high road—in Piccadilly.

From draft of letter to Edward Titus:

I should be very glad to sub-edit *This Quarter* with you. I have done a good deal of reviewing & it would be excellent experience & would give me a perfect excuse to keep Paris my headquarters & at the same time keeping in close touch with London.[11]

9 August 1929

The Bourgoint brother & sister, 'Les Enfants Terribles,' *la vierge sacrée* & the *kouros* [the sacred virgin and the beautiful youth]. Cocteau's best book [*Les Enfants Terribles* (1929)] is due to them & other works of art. There is more to come, not to speak of the varieties of love & passion due to those two.

10 August 1929

Lunch with Carl van Vechten. Not disappointed, not exactly. He wrote the *Blind Bow Boy* [(1923)] & became almost the only celebrity I've tried

[11] This editorial job never materialised. Nor is it mentioned in Hugh Ford's account of Titus's editorship of *This Quarter* from 1929. See Ford, *Published in Paris: American and British Writers, Printers and Publishers in Paris, 1920–1939* (London: Garnstone Press, 1975), 139–46. Her characteristic 'invisibility' in less recent literary histories of this period partly explains the deferred recognition of Butts's significance.

vaguely to meet. When we met in London, we 'clicked.' We always shall. This time, he was tired; a hang-over or something & I suspected the tired-out NY vive-up. Not by origin I suspect a man born to such things—fashionable society, bric-a-brac, wit, sometimes profound observation & in that book, poetry of the 'monde où on s'amuse.'

A Saki [H. H. Munro] without Saki's faith. Also, he hates the countryside. He likes me. We shall see each other again.[12]

26 August 1929

The study of our times finished; if in revision, I can make the argument flawless, both logically & by description—external evidence, I may be remembered by it—as by a contribution even to human thought & the dawn of a new era.[13]

My fatigue is terrible, even muscular. I have worked often to 5 in the morning & 6. I account the speed in which it was done as a sign that the time was ready for it, universally & in my head.

During September 1929 with "fraternal & extraordinary friendship" Butts looks after Mireille Havet at 14 rue de Monttessuy "with unfailing devotion & good humour despite being poor & tired herself." They organise a number of seances with the Scottish painter Vivien Ogilvie.[14]

[12] They do not in fact meet again. Butts is curiously absent/present in van Vechten's photo Album, vol 2. MS autograph by Butts reads: "Carl Van Vechten, 'The Blind Bow-Boy,' Florence to Clarges St to Paris—at the Vert Galant [Paris restaurant]. From the Arno to the Seine, by the Thames: running water, (glass, crystal, jade . . .), *Septentrion placuit* . . . , Mary Butts Aug 10th 1929." However the photo which should accompany this inscription is missing. Friends of Butts's whose photos were done that summer include Virgil Thomson and Paul Robeson. Carl van Vechten papers. From Butts's mention of "Clarges St," it is clear that she and Vechten met when she was living at 22 Clarges St in the spring of 1929. Perhaps he came to her Greek party . . . Hector Hugh Munro "Saki" (1870–1916), British writer.

[13] Never finished to Butts's satisfaction, see 9 September 1931.

[14] Mireille Havet journal entry 13 September 1929, cited in Blondel *Mary Butts*, 227. Vivien Ogilvie, Scottish painter, translator, educationalist, and social historian who lived in Havet's flat in 1929 and had a brief affair with her that year.

17 September 1929

Great fatigue: then Mireille, for the last month, ill here.

I've learned how to dress septic wounds; there are the seances. A friendship with Mireille as though a fair shape or clay had been fired.

23 September 1929

Never has there been such work, knowledge, desolation, vision, joy, sorrow as in these two months. I'm the same woman but re-crystallised; something has been added to me & fused—or is fusing. I wonder sometimes if I shall live it out; but I have lived death & I have lived life. Plunged, steeped once more into that which is 'eternal'—always there, in the things which our lives & eras are only ways of saying, endless repetitions on life-&-death-themes, & occasionally what is the theme we divide into life & death.

It is curious, when I read Merezhkovsky's *Akhnaton*, I feel as if I were at home, a home long-left, but mine.

25 September 1929

Mireille's Miracle: consummation of all that we've done here. Some fatigue, laziness, shyness prevents & hinders me from writing it down, but a sure miracle. She wrote & then said that I'd brought her back to life again.[15] In every sense.

Hogarth's *Philip and Alexander of Macedon* finished & my Alexander still in the making: farer off since I've been forced to shed some fancies; but each day nearer since I approach him.[16] Before I have done, I shall be not far-off seeing him face to face. So Athens draws by a thread her lovers, by the fine cord Heirmamenê.[17]

[15] The material and intellectual support Butts gave Mireille Havet was immense: "My confidence, at the very least my curiosity and my interest in life in general and in my own life, are almost recovered thanks to Mary's genius and what she makes me glimpse and morally define as a sudden and secret way out, in so far as it might be imagined only by her at this stage in the history of poetry." Havet, journal entry 16–17 September 1929. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 227–9.

[16] This interest will result in Butts's biographical narrative, *The Macedonian* (1933).

[17] For Heimarmenê, see Glossary.

Cecil said that my 'modesty' was an excuse for groundless self-distrust; had crippled me & would cripple me. He began to teach me—until, o mon bien aimé [my belovéd], you tired of me, & I went away by myself to a hell, half real, half self-created. You got me out of it when you died. Now I feel you come again, about the flat again.

As Mireille always tells me, I must not be so 'sur-sensible;' I must harden myself & not give, at least, so many damns about what other people think & say of me. . . . hasn't Chaucer tried to teach me to love, each person, each thing, "accordynge to their kynde"?[18]

1 October 1929

One thing that anthology [Perry's *Children of the Sun* (1923)] shows us is what art can do. Hundreds of peoples have had goddesses delivered of gods & the father nowhere much about; or spring-brides, ascending & descending from underground. But only one people had Delos & its "alm, island of pain & love" [Euripides, *Iphigenia among the Taurus*]; nor the twins "who fair-haired Leto bore."

There is only one Persephone.

Only one stable, at Bethlehem, with its star, its shepherds, its three holy kings. Twelve hundred years later, Our Lady of Chartres.

It is man's instinct to desire life. Why cannot he see where life lies, its sources & how to achieve it. We are committing slow suicide.

Having looked again at Wells' *History of the World* [(1920)]—after Perry's *Children of the* Sun—I want to write a book about the real nature of "mana" & animism. While, as to Wells, I cannot see why a man of his imagination cannot see that nothing, no thought which has managed to externalise itself in great forms, buildings—as in Egypt, or even ritual, or even sometimes in common prestige or renown, let alone in any great life or art or effort of thought—is without a base, a source in reality; the wholly unseen reality behind phenomena. I'm no philosopher but out of Plato Spenser made his verse—"so every soul indeed."[19]

While, as for our anthropologists—they will write up the facts of every belief in every quarter of the globe; but even the best of them,

[18] Chaucer's phrase is important to Butts, see February 1926.

[19] Butts's quotation does not appear anywhere in Spenser. Perhaps she is thinking of "so every spirit, as it is most pure," in Spenser, "An Hymne in Honour of Beautie" as this is quoted by Emerson in his essay "The Poet."

Frazer hardly, gives one the least idea, the least suggestion of the passion, the emotion that made men behave like that. In Egypt; in Polynesia; in Babylon; at Chartres.

(And how mad our symbols for the Trinity would appear to an anthropologist for whom it was a study, no more.)

It is for art to take over the anthropologist's material. Vivien [Ogilivie] said it was for me to do also.

[Wells's] ability; vulgarity; his influence on the people now without tradition since the Church & the land have been taken from them.

Cf. Huxley, *Point Counterpoint* [(1928)], Lord Tantamount's assistant [Illidge].

It is for us to imagine what Wells & his public—also largely all Americans do not know—know in the sense of an ambience all around them; a tradition; mana drawn from sources still potent whether personal consciousness is acute or not. Also what will happen to the world if it decides to scrap its tradition & all conscious continuity with it.[20]

In early October 1929 Gabriel Atkin sends Butts a postcard inviting her to join him in St Malo, the medieval port on the emerald coast of Brittany.

5 October 1929

St Malo. Another Sergey Odyssey without Sergey.

9 October 1929

Impressions of St Malo to be written later: pleasure in this creation out of pure stone, geographical curiosities out to sea, & fierce tides.

On falling asleep I have often been conscious (&, during this last great fatigue, generally conscious, aware) that I had "shot off" to places & events known always in my dream life; & with these, relations with people I know quite differently, though intimately, when awake. . . . lately, I remember, "off we go." This has interested me so much as to wake me; to try & fix it—them—in my memory at least. With deep sleep all memory disappears.

Now those dreams are, roughly, between two categories: ordinary

[20] Basis of Butts's essay *Traps for Unbelievers* (1932).

dreams, & the high, magic dreams on which my life has been strung. They form a sort of threshold between the two: or rather, a point, underlined, between the infinite gradations between one & the other; the first & the last; the common & the rare. On this matter there is Dunne's comment in *An Experiment with Time* [(1927)].[21] There, as I remember, he says that there is a recognised form of memory link in dreaming, when a dream of a thing unknown presents itself as known, part of a long sequence. This the doctors have named. Now this touches the question—but lots of these dreams appeared as picking up what's been going on all the time. So I recognise them when I begin to dream—'here we are again' I say—as if on the common plane of what I see & when I go "east of the sun, west of the moon." Where, for example, I find the true Sergey; know the true Cecil is.

Is this feeling an example of the trick of the mind Dunne quotes?

Or are they really part of a series? If so, what is the meaning of the word 'series' in this case?

Love of Gabriel.
Love for Gabriel.
Gabriel's Catholicism I respect & find beautiful.

One says "God" very naturally in this old town where the Cathedral—begun by Thérieus & finished under Napoleon III—squats brooding her ancient house-cluster like a hen.

15 October 1929 [32 Rue de Raynouard]

Back in Paris for 2 nights.

Gabriel's love is like a flower sprung up beside me & over me. Tomorrow I go back—may God let me—to his arms.

Coming up in the train on the 14th I watched as beautiful a day as I have ever seen from the long open french carriage window. There was Le

[21] John William Dunne (1875–1949), aeronautical engineer. Dunne analysed his own dreams for evidence of future events of whatever magnitude. Not only did he find strong evidence of previsioning in his dreams, his records showed that there were an equal number of past and future events. From this he claimed that in dreams we escape from rigorous linear time. His ideas were influential, especially on H. G. Wells and J. B. Priestley.

Mans, & its Cathedral, the high-pitched tower wall—apple trees hung with enamel balls, cold green to scarlet, enamelled turf under each.

At Chartres—the moon waxing, smoke mist in the meads. (Here as I wrote I went off on the best 'astral journey' I remember in years. I felt Gaby's hand, physically in mine.)

Again on the journey—there were little lakes, & first it was red rock & apples, then slowly the great french landscape with its sense of 'vast horizons,' slowly rising land, forest-arms & single poplars; chateaux wth high-pitched roofs & occasional modern reconstructions with a tendency to break out into mosaic dragons & general heraldry let into slates.

All the way up, single magpies—all but one flight of 5 or 7. "One for sorrow" I say "waiting for the moon to rise" out of the window—a Sergey song & even earlier.[22]

And I blessed the Power which has filled my life with poetry.

16 October 1929

We are up against the alcohol business as ever people have been—put one way—Gabriel still prefers Pernod to me in practice. Just as he no doubt once preferred any light letch to Siegfried Sassoon; accepting the five years sorrow after with a sort of fatalism.[23]

18 October 1929

There is little to tell, except love—& the "ambivalence of its emotion." For the rest there is the wine-blue air here, winter's approach, my physical weakness & Gabriel's; this old town, the high stones right & left, & the memories of the Lady Tiphane. Also of many pirates, Surcouf, whose name I like; the Malinois, this old, rich, dear, mixed, hard land.[24]

20 October 1929

As a 'magic' town St Malo is taking hold of me.[25] The sequence runs. General pleasure in it & a sense of being on the keltic border; the marches between France & what is not France.

[22] "Waitin' for the Moon," (1925) words by John Brown, music by Sam Lerner.

[23] Atkin and the British poet Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967) had been lovers.

[24] Robert Surcouf (1773–1827), member of one of the most important Malinois families, feared by the English and called "Baron of the Empire" by Napoleon.

[25] For more information on the effect of St Malo on Butts, see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 232–6.

Remembered Blackwood's "Ancient Sorceries" [in *John Silence* (1908)]; it is that sort of town. Fell upon—I felt that I should upon a ghost book, E. F. Benson, a Tauchnitz [edition], but mostly new. "There is magic about."

Air, quiet, love are bringing "me out to life again." Proportions slip in—on the knight's move. More & more I understand the nature of the thing we have so faultily analysed as along, across, through; then, there, now; before, after, & all our old friends, we sum up into time & space. As there is nothing we perceive which is not subject to the old descriptions; so there is nothing which cannot be taken out of them.

21 October 1929

"Eternity isn't a quantity, it's a quality."[26] E. F. Benson, *Visible & Invisible* [(1923)].

Benson's work on the supernatural falls under several well-defined heads. This book is representative (& a find). Examples of:

Fun at the mediums, sense not scepticism, "Mr Tilly's Séance"
Vampires—here he is least convincing, "The Outcast," "Mrs Amworth"
A 'left-over' of early man, "The Horror Horn," cf. Buchan.
The murderer-haunt, "At the Farmhouse," "The Gardener," "In the Tube"
The man of science who goes too far–scientific over-weight, "'And the Dead Spake'"
The blessed dead, "Roderick's story" & in part, "Machaon." The first a very lovely story, cf. May Sinclair.
The evil elemental, "Negotium Perambulans."

In all, a good run over the course—Benson's course. Egypt omitted as an 'occult' distributing centre—he generally puts it in.

24 October 1929

Remember: how Gabriel slept—coolly like a child in the bed across this old, wide, haunted room. If he goes on like that, there will be life again & peace.

Now—I think he might have gone out with the tides if I hadn't come.

[26] From "In the Tube," in *The Collected Ghost Stories of E. F. Benson*, 301.

26–7 October 1929

That fence crossed: Gabriel & I together—a virginity gone west. Je plaisante [I'm joking], but the joy can't find words—yet. And Gabriel this morning is full of pride & swank & peace: sang "O! Mistress mine" [Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*] to me & old songs from the [Music] Halls, & carries himself with an air & a spring that is all new & wholly blessed.

29 October 1929

"Saison en enfer" [ref. to Rimbaud's collection of prose poems]—one of those without reason—the blind man turning away his eyes from the sun & saying that there is no light.

It seems to me that people like me, for I count myself among the people of genius, have these fifty-fifty experiences of joy & its opposite just because they are pressing through all the time the true nature of being where the pairs of opposites are united. Only, being still subject to our space-time contractions, we 'live along the line' like the rest of the world, only rarely aware, & that partially, of the true nature of existence.

Names for it—eternity; true present; reality; the-thing-in-itself; union of the pairs of opposites; union of the five senses & their prostration (China).

[From draft of letter to Atkin's Aunt Anne Weir; with regard to alcohol]:

There is only one real barrier—insuperable for me; it killed my stepfather & made my girlhood a nightmare; has ruined more than one of the people I love best in the world. I can see a very lovely life ahead of us—he is already hardly the same man (or I the same woman) as the two who met at the station here [at St Malo] about 3 weeks ago.

7 November 1929

During this gap of time—peace augmented & disintoxication. I am very proud of him, of the Gentlest Shepherd—the Golden Boy & Monseigneur.

Maynard Keynes' joke: "Do you do as Edgar Wills [unidentified] or do you still Lett Haines?"[27]

[27] John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946), economist. Member of the Bloomsbury circle. One of Atkins' lovers, see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 239.

A Game I should like to invent & play & perfect: to take persons out of history, out of letters—& 'make-out' as the Brontes called it, more adventures for them.[28]

There are episodes & moments in books & people we all want to know more about—not just the sequels, but anywhere. Round the corner in the looking-glass—the end of the looking-glass lane.

Shocks

Learned Gabriel's anti-feminist—rotten word—opinions, instincts, 'unreasons,' prejudices. The bitter, dangerous story repeated—in the man I love. Am literally thrust back, in spite of my attempts to escape, into personal contact with Sergey again. With all its agony, danger & futility.

On discovering Gabriel Atkin's infidelity with a male lover:

The 'theme song' if you like to all this—if Maynard Keynes found it intolerable, what reaction could Gabriel expect from me?

Then, slowly, round the corner, as it happens always, on the knight's move—we began to re-make & deepen our relationship. Last night I shall never forget.

20 November 1929

Tomorrow we go to Chartres & have our Sacre. Then Paris & our adventure.

Tonight he is asleep. It is the last night in this old, warm, ugly, large haunted room. In it I have loved, suffered, wept, prayed, dreamed, fought, loved. Won.

Send Mary a dear kiss
On a lily! Lord, do this.
[Morris, "Rapunzel"]

Will our ghosts hang about this room—a film of our passion? Will future travellers hear that rare laugh of his, that laugh that haunts me? And what is this patch of eternity we have become aware of, spun out on a time thread?

(For Dunne: innumerable small signatures, & often I have thought the word he [Gabriel] was to say a second later. This past coincidence.)

[28] Butts had attempted this in an unpublished novel written in collaboration with Cecil Maitland (1922–3). See 1923 note 5.

6 December 1929 [Paris]

For these last weeks there have been no notes, & little time between joy, grief reversed & 'immensely to do' to make any. Also, the fear of new pain & more—a hideous repetition out of the past made me afraid to write.

But—but—tonight the Daimones have allowed me to go to rest singing.

The new sport—gave Gabriel his bath. His body is like a slender archaic Apollo—in alabaster—a rare wonder. I don't wonder that all Maynard Keynes could cry was: "Get those clothes off. Strip! Strip!"

Gabriel is my joy/ Gabriel is my delight/ Gabriel is my heart of gold—[29]

Is it to be wondered at that he has been much loved. Apollo is the god he is most like, & my Kouros.

In our fairy-tale, the lost & wounded Prince has been found by the wise magician, who tends him in his house & teaches the Princess more how she should do so. And all this happens in a part, another part of that immense Wood in which all love-affairs happen—& where there is room enough, difference & similarity enough for all lovers that ever were or are or will be.

When joy comes to Gabriel it descends on him like a gift, a kiss from the Holy Spirit. He—It—there is no distinction is the cleanest thing (purest if one likes the word)—that I have ever known.

Since tonight I feel capable of writing, let me put it down while I may. The black curtain that hangs across the way that I must go, receding with my step but there, is a little transparent this night.

Think of a corridor, a passage white-wood panelled with a green carpet strip as at Salterns. My passage in life is down one of these & I have passed many windows, some with pleasant views out on to several different lands; some on to courts squaring a well or a fountain or a heap of tin cans.[30]

[29] Here Butts is adapting the song "Greensleeves."
[30] Basis of Butts's poem, "Rites de Passage" (1931).

13 December 1929

Birthday night—one prayer.

O God! O! Daimones—let me live in peace with Gabriel & Camilla & occupy myself with a masterpiece, & let us both come to our proper fame & employment at last.

14 December 1929

The dream made me ache for spring in my own country: a grass causeway between floods: shallow blue sea. At the stream—at Studland [Dorset]—I remember dreaming—'this is to start me off.' At least I understood, even in sleep, a theory which goes like this. All that we do here with our bodies & our unawakened senses is a sort of shadow or mime or feeble misrepresentation—there is no word coined for it—of our true life which is going on in eternity. In moments of great emotion, we occasionally link up the two. Again, occasionally in sleep we get 'out,' & as I am dreaming now, see another representation, a disordered, fragmentary, but very poignant film of part of what is going on.

In dreams like this I see the origin & sap of many fairy & folktales.

I am sometimes recomforted & sustained past belief in my belief in Gabriel.

Last book—Dr Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. Admirable set of short novels & in judgement a warning for all time.

17 December 1929

I need a new margin sign—for something for which I have yet to find the words—& this because no one yet has found the words, the names for certain new relations between things, states; which sometimes flash across my mind & then I almost immediately lose.[31]

19 December 1929

I shall have to wait till the next flash & then force myself to describe it. While, as our language was not invented to express these experiences, words will have to be found.

[31] See 20 June 1928.

This is really the summary of a writer, & especially of a poet's life.

Phrases from [Thomas] Browne in my head—"the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy" etc. [*Urn Burial*]. I often think or wonder or pretend that I have lately been near death. Am I to have some nearer experience?

We shall see.

21 December 1929

I am utterly sure that I am on the road to some great experience, comparable, 'in line with,' at least in close relation to the recent discoveries in mathematics & in physics. It will be the experience of their sensual reality, their effect on the human animal I am: that is all. And enough.

Gabriel's love is bringing my wits back; my courage. He has restored "the fine thread of Heirmamenê" which once ran through me, linking all I am together; the fine thread which was nearly cut in so many places, & is now rejoining.

I have now in Gabriel someone for whom I must do my best work.

23 December 1929

While I doubt, or pretend to doubt if I shall ever write again, these notebooks fill apace. The day's tiny discipline & part salve to my conscience.

If I learn to catch these new ways of seeing the relation where before I had conceived of no relation—if I can catch these, describe—illustrate—get them across—I shall not have played with them for nothing.

Remember: Mireille's face a week ago up at Jean Guérin's after she had refused me the 10 francs. For the first time I saw it coarse, rather vile. So much for the heroic girl I nursed here, who talked like an angel—showed me what I had shewn her of Paradise; of how it was possible to create the kingdom of heaven here now; of the meaning of good will.

(As for me, shall I ever bear Comus, my son?)[32]

[32] Butts and Atkin discussed having a son, to be named after Milton's poem *Comus* (oddly, Comus was Rebecca West's pet name for her son Anthony); despite further comment, Butts never mentions any pregnancy.

The chance remains that the athletics through which we have put our minds for disproportionately piddling results may be sufficient to send us all out to play once more the Sacred Game.

24 December 1929

Crossed [the Channel]. What a Christmas Eve.

25 December 1929 [London]

Christmas Day—lunch at [her mother's flat] at 3 Buckingham Gate [with her mother, brother, Tony, John Rodker, Camilla]. I the half-dreaded, half-despised Exile.

28 December 1929

A great peace tonight. Pure Saint Esprit, & I on my knees for joy. (Nor will I let Freud's perfectly sound mechanics explain it away. Explain its way, yes.)

The chief memory is the peace which came when Gabriel got my wire & our spirits exchanged such kisses as only the blessed know.

Remember: Walking up the Mall to the Palace, the rose-bronze, the turquoise & various jades of the sky laced with bare twigs. A strictly unpaintable picture.

30 December 1929

Shall I ever harden myself? How much I have lost in my life through oversensitiveness—which makes me prefer to give rather than to take. Now that I am so desperately poor, I see the inconveniences. I should have visited more; sold my work more; acquired more gifts from my men friends while my youth was still fresh.

[From draft letter to Tony Butts:]

As to his remarks on my work. He is quite right. I wanted to explore the hitherto unexplored, & having partly done so, must now shew its relation to broad, common phenomena. Have just found the way to that relation through what I understand, &, above all, to what I am sensible to in the recent discoveries in physics. Repeat, that scientific discoveries are

one way of apprehending common, universal realities. Finale, three days' quiet will do me good.

31 December 1929

(Just past midnight.) Went with John to *Journey's End* [(1928)].[33] As honest an evening as I've ever passed with him. May it be the beginning of peace. For I am still, in my heart, of good-will.

[33] Robert Charles Sherriff (1896–1975), British playwright and screenwriter. *Journey's End* was based on his frontline experiences in the Great War. Butts used "A Journey's End" as the working title of the story she begins in the spring of 1931 and which is published in *Several Occasions* (1932) as "In Bloomsbury."

1930

1 January 1930 [14 rue de Monttessuy, Paris]

Midnight. Home again.

4 January 1930

Scratching behind the mirror & its frame for a lost visiting card [I] unearthed—not the card, but 3 long nail-files, one shell paper-knife, one little 'lime' [file], one Cocteau drawing, one rare stamp & pins innumerable.

8 January 1930

Last night—one of those few which go to nothing else but the music of the spheres—at least man got that idea from such occasions. It is so well with me. And with Gabriel.

14 January 1930

Young Jeannot [Bourgoint] came; lay down a moment—'s'allongeait' (good word)—beside me. For once his sorrow passed to me, like one clean drop of water crosses a leaf. There was an endless second of complete realisation & affection. Jeannot can evoke magical states & instants & accept & admit them. Voilà sa puissance! (Cocteau knew this.)

Oh that my Gabriel would take his life into his own hands! Then, & only then, should I be utterly free to love him—& so, ten times more able to help him.

I know the divine powers that are in Gabriel tied together in "the subtle knot which makes him man" [Donne, "The Exstasie"]. Only, & in this lies my chief fear—he has not been trained to command—either himself or others; to reflect; to reason; to examine; be dispassionate; least of all about himself. "If faut être toujours ivre" ["Enivrez-vous!"]—Baudelaire is right enough. Drunk—but on what? Or rather Baudelaire is half right—but with every drunkenness there must be an equal & corresponding sobriety. Then comes the Delphic secret—that it's by the creation we make out of those states contrasted that our real—that is our immortal—life is made. That is, where our real life begins. While as to drunkenness—there is essentially only one sobriety, but an infinite choice of drunks. From the mystic blinded by ecstasy before God—to the unsteady step, sprawled body, meaningless speech, crazed judgement, sterile emotions.

With that kind of drunkenness last Sunday Gabriel poisoned, smashed, destroyed his princely gift to me.

"Every day a new adventure," he said one heavenly night. Yet the pull against adventure in him is still strong, & my deadly fear is that it may prevail; write 'Finis' on our love on which so much of our adventures hang; our playing of the Sacred Game, impoverish this great, hurt, agonised world of ours which he & I among others were created to light up & delight.

18 January 1930

The other day I read [Browning's] *Sludge the Medium*—the first time since I was old enough to be 'all round' it. From it—for information I principally gathered that Sludge based his true belief on Signatures. Browning is non-committal.

Science, our age's masterpiece is shewing us the way—back to our prescientific guesses, disinfected, related, enhanced. Has the time come, when avoiding the earlier errors of the SPR [Society for Psychical Research] & disinfecting all life out of the enquiry by insisting that a scientific enquiry into phenomena which happen under a totally new set of conditions must conform with our 3-dimensional physics (not to say morality) here—is it possible, to start if no more than a bit, a catalogue—no more—a description of things seen. Seen upon that scene whose actors are one more than the real US—whose eidola sit watching from balcony to box?[1]

To do this is to found the science of mysticism. I began that last summer. These notes are nothing—a discipline, an act of faith. While my nature is brimming, like one who has drunk in the night of the sweet cup whose draught he has to name to enjoy henceforth for ever after.

Whether through idleness, blindness or mischance—sleeping I have never noted one of [J. W.] Dunne's futurity dreams. Awake I get the sense of the future continually—as a week ago, when in spite of an almost matchless joy at the moment, I saw the signals set against Gabriel & I.

The 'signals set' gets it exactly. Again, not for long. A week has re-

[1] Eidola: unsubstantial images, apparitions, phantoms. Sometimes ideal or idealised figures.

stored us to the same measureless rest & pleasure in each other; again we each have for the other something without a name which makes common troubles indifferent & our souls' health possible again.

21 January 1930

Remember: Last night—remember it by Gabriel's head laid back on the pillow, parallel with the ceiling, chin a little up; quiet in the dark blue star eyes; his mouth set into a line more glad than any laugh could turn it. Pouring into him were all the forces which had been drained out—it was like watching water reach its level, a thirst being quenched.

Receiving life, he gave it out. In every way—except that he was very silent. When it was 'over,' he kissd me above my navel, under my breasts.

22 January 1930

[T. E. Lawrence's] *Revolt in the Desert* [(1927)] again—worth twice its first reading.

How little I understood that book the first time. I have never before reread & found it so worth it & so new. Also, it will never be my luck to know Lawrence of Arabia this side of Paradise; & even once there he won't open quickly to me.

Vivien [Ogilvie] called.

We talked of what is exactly Mireille's strange conversion to evil. There is no other name for it.

28 January 1930

I have begun to re-discipline myself, & so went out on that walk; alarmed at my pale face.

During these last days, weak among other causes from diminished 'hootch'; the mind resting, as it does at such times, in old story-books known by heart, I must have nearly committed Professor James' ghost-stories to memory. It occurred to me that the horrid details by which James gets his effects are incidental; that the concept behind his work is a simple repetition of one old theory of the occult, taken on the side of it, that's inimical to man.

For the last 100 years the triumph of man, the chief triumph—has been the sciences by which he has described & taken over the forces of

earth & air. Now how inevitable it seems that only by the new way he has made for himself, the way man had begun to say had destroyed all, taken all validity from any but its own—that it is by Science that the materialism we had come to confuse & hold synonymous with Science is at the point of being destroyed. ‡

‡Hasty Bunch [2]

The new objectivists have their work cut out—the boldest, the most delicate. Everything which its fruits have proved is to be restored without superstition, accretion, without truce with the 'cosy-corner' crowd howling for triumph; restored to be reformed, relearned, rejudged, reloved, reused, re-adored.

30 January 1930

Roy Martin called—or rather, Picus Martius—came in just after the poem came out.

31 January 1930

Quiet death all day. Waiting, as I did all last night, for Gabriel to come to me.

1 February 1930

Remember: Sequence: part of my elegy, or a threnody for me.

For a moment, some time after waking a sense of what we call by the unlikeable name of 'bliss.' We had been trying to talk about Einstein & my mind had gone out collecting, greedy for the *New Encyclopaedia Britannica* which would give Russell's article on the meaning of Relativity in life. I observed again my sole, individual sure point of contact, the growing sense of what I've called here 'true present' (Dunne) which is developing in me.

Read de Unamuno's *Tragic Sense of Life* [trans. Crawford Flitch, (1921)]; which, he says, consists in our unquenchable desire for personal immortality & the fact that reason contradicts such hope. With him I went down like a plummet into the spirit's ocean-abyss.

[2] A reference perhaps to Robert McAlmon's collection of stories, *A Hasty Bunch* (1923).

Remember for Gabriel when revising "L'Inquiétude"—he draws a picture of Mary Butts writing a poem about Gabriel Atkin, by Gabriel Atkin—e.g. a valuable historical document.[3]

1 February 1930

Consider (on rereading Wells' *Outline of History*)—one example of a perception we have not sufficiently isolated or related: Wells describes no more than the obvious improvements man can effect—in his own life & in external arrangements. Why does this incontrovertible programme seem insufficient, insipid even?

"Inquiétude" poem—half done. (A Freud question—why when playing about with prosody does the word 'trochee' continually slip my memory? For years past—the only one?)

In E. Nesbit's book *The Story of the Amulet* [(1906)]—a child's book & a classic—where would any one child or not soonest be—with the children, Cyril, Anthea, Robert & Jane, back in the past in Egypt & Babylon or on their one visit to the greatly improved future of the world?[4] 'Charming' as that chapter is, no one would prefer either its life or its peoples to any, except the pre-dynastic, time we know to have been, in spite of pain, war, treachery—cruelty even.

We are back again—that we have to find—(of necessity—to equalise our physical conquests over Nature & all the adventure of applied Science)—a fresh 'spiritual' adventure. Which will be a re-statement & a development of our old experience in the field which gave us our religions. Whenever I begin to try & think any road leads me back to this simplicity. And to the conviction which I call knowing that this adventure will happen—soon; & be as strange, troublesome, difficult as the same re-statement in terms of art or in the teaching of a fresh 'Bodhisat.'

With this, by this only can we face a physical Utopia. Without such a

[3] Butts's 1930 poem "Inquiétude" remains unpublished. Atkin's picture of Butts has not been traced.

[4] Butts has clearly read this novel much earlier as it is referred to by a character in her story "Widdershins/ Deosil" (1924), in *With and Without Buttons*, 152.

new incalculable factor a physical Utopia might be the death of us, & its achievement our suicide; our attainment of despair.

Can I be now more adventurous? I reached this prophecy before. Are there any hints, however faint, for the least indication of the quarter even this may come from?

Since last summer "Eppur si muove."[5]

I. Einstein & Quantum Theory. Can only guess; believe that I feel & know more than I can justifiy. (Have to wait for the new *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for the Russell on Relativity consequences.)

II. Dunne. His theory means if true a possible growth of our awareness of the 'true present.' That I seem to be developing. Its laws?

III. My own work—taking up Sullivan's hint as to a "science of mysticism."

IV. From these it arrives that since the last bolt man has shot has been Science, Science will play a huge part in whatever is to come.

V. Genius is a faculty for relating what has not been hitherto related, & so by a fertile new generalisation our perceptions are enlarged & so our power. I hazard:

What is it maddens me in Miss Harrison's *Prolegomena*, in Wells' *Outline of History* (two examples)? It is this. That for all these amazing, lovely, powerful, fruitful, terrible, ridiculous things & events are described & only rationalised, only their errors, outward forms which can be catalogued are subject to examination. What gave greek myth & the beliefs of all mankind their power to save or to kill is really ignored. On the other hand: Gilbert Murray's *Four Stages of Greek Religion* (1912) has some final value because he admits 'force' & its mystery.

VI. Since Science has given us classification, it has put things in their order & lately seems by way of the many to be returning to the one.

Let this much be said for us that we have experienced 'inspiration'; recognised it; used it (but equally felt as if it were

[5] See 6 April 1920.

using us; that cuts both ways & it is useless to deny it). Finally we have even come to examine this awareness to 'raw energy;' criticise it; affirm it & deny it variously. (What are the observed results of denying it while remaining subject to it?)

All this is baby-talk. But can we by adding consciousness, reason, observation whistle-up more tractable winds, our own tunes through the breath? To do this is genius. And man is inclined to suspect too much self-consciousness when the air stirs. And there is T. S. Eliot for a warning.

VII. That leads to a last possibility—perhaps no more than a need—for a search, a look-out for, a gymnastic to catch new relations between old ideas, 'ways of seeing things.' Again, no novelty but we go dazing along among the old positions & descriptions—once fresh now facile & arbitrary as paper-money.

Fresh images—they have always been granted & are the writer's welcome; fresh positions—these are harder, depend more on vision than on dexterity, are more slowly realised, admitted. While, in some cases, they have the power to alter more radically than a conventionally-said idea however bold in thought—if the idea wears the mask of stale words.

23 February 1930

A conventionally bright, half-clouded east-winded winter Sunday. Sustained by my more & more delighting & enchanting Quentin Bell, a masque in lunacy worthy of [Webster's] *The Duchess of Malfi* threaded in & out of the flat.[6]

1 March 1930

De Unamuno's *Tragic Sense of Life*. I know the argument; now that the pain's come back again will copy out a sentence or so of particular illumination for me, apart from the main argument:

"All this talk of a man surviving in his children or in his works, or in the universal consciousness, is but a vague verbiage which satisfies only those who suffer from affective stupidity . . . who may be persons of a

[6] Quentin Bell (1910–96), British writer, son of Vanessa Bell and nephew of Virginia Woolf. *The Duchess of Malfi*, IV, iii, contains a parade of madmen. Quentin Bell gives his own account in *Elders and Betters* (London: John Murray, 1995).

certain cerebral distinction. For it is possible to possess great talent—& be stupid as regards the feelings & even morally imbecile. These clever-witted, affectively stupid persons . . . " Ch I.

How one knows these people, or senses them. Shuns them or pities. John Rodker & men like his friend [C. K.] Ogden.[7] Much of Bloomsbury—& even to Bertrand Russell.

"We all lack something; only some of us feel the lack & others do not. Or they pretend not to feel the lack & then they are hypocrites."—His list of men burdened with the tragic sense.

From a few sentences such as these I understand Sergey, Gabriel—even myself.

4 March 1930

Secret of Sergey: that he is propitious for poetry. There is no more to be said about it or for him. Or less.

9 March 1930

From Gabriel lately I have had some very noble help; help that a man gives his mate. After these last evenings out in hell's stews, I have come back to a well & a fountain of pure water.

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17 March 1930

Am I the same woman as she who wrote those last notes? After 9 days starvation, experience, cold, illness, despair up to this moment's respite tonight?

Physically I'm noticeably changed, thinned, ivory-pallid & blue veined (not becoming). Have learned several things & most of them hideous. Have learned through the kind of seeing which is called having one's nose rubbed. Have been told to write about it. Instinctive answer "God forbid," & that may mark the change, for very rarely have I ever felt that any experience had left so raw a wound as to be finally useless, untranslatable into art. This last must serve my memory. (Perhaps in life one gets one's death-wound by installments. If so, I am perceptibly nearer my end.)

[7] Charles Kay Ogden (1889–1957), British philosopher and inventor, with I. A. Richards, of the simplified language, Basic English.

Evenings spent in literal hell. (Compare with what the writer of *All Quiet*—knows.) [8] There is the March wind iced & fouled, iced liquid mud, blood-rose lights & infernal blue.

Learned—pride & delight in Gabriel—the most exquisite I've ever known. Then, tonight, shame & disillusion & despair to equal it. All over again. Drink—of course. The corner it seemed we should never reach, reached at last—its blunt angle a little obscuring the dreadful road we'd come by. For Gabriel I've risked my reputation, possibly my share of this fortune. For a man I can't trust—the words go on & on—for a man I can't trust.

If & when I'm out of this & reasonably well-off must I cut him out of me? There was a heavenly Gabriel standing guard over me with a thin, bright sword. What has he to do with this thing drink has made shameful?

We'd have been married months ago—if I'd been sure. And until I am sure, I shall never marry him & give him Comus—I have to wait, that babe & his small spirit has already something to say to his father, the male instrument by which he should put on flesh.

I will not wait long—if in 6 months I can't judge, by all the notes & strict dates I've kept—that drink is <u>permanently</u> losing its hold on him & that reasonably fast, it will have to be over between us.

I love him: as a woman loves her man; as his mate & his copain. As an eternal spirit also knows & greets & accompanies another on a passage through eternity. This is our relation. And because of this I can't have him any lower than his proper best. I've seen that best—in flashes—his 'virtu;' know also the love we've created between us is a force operative <u>outside</u> us; what it could do.

18 March 1930

Relieved by the writing of this, our desire for peace we hardly troubled to conceal found us a way to it.

[8] E. M. Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (trans. Wheen, 1929).

But—consider the neatness of the Divine revenge—that Gabriel Atkin, who, when sober is one of young society's brightest wits should, when only in his second cup, become so unparalleled a bore, & one moreover—so that not even the signature should be lacking—marked with a frequent dribble to point his disgrace.

19 March 1930

Remember: effects of excellent food after 24 hours' fast & some exercise. It was "beautiful" as the *All Quiet* man describes his soldiers relieving themselves, at their ease, out of doors. May our 'suite' be as pleasant.

By ways as lovely as these—among others—I re-enter greek religion & carry on where Jane Harrison left off. I can make 'earth prayers' again & praises, without the least reservation or hesitation—at last. Let in by a good back kitchen garden door. The lesson began more than 15 years ago—how bad a scholar to have taken so long over the full inference. For on one part, on the day I grasped that first principle of greek prose, & turned Macaulay into that language, finding the concrete for each of his abstracts.

On reapplications of this my work found its Logos ("and the word became flesh")—never stays till it has.

Now I feel that a last link has closed up a chain, a very flexible, fair jewel. I felt the subconscious at work, stress & doubt & that sense of incompleteness that gives me no rest. The relief arrived at now comes on like dancing. Dancing Ledge on the Dorset coast: dancing-floor—where the sun's ballet mixes with the sea's—Odyssey again—so we're round again—this time by the field lavatories in *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Yet—& quite apart—Homer lacks no virility, his 'noble sentiments' are—miracle of miracles—realities as Mr Bloom [from Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922)] in the lavatory of this day's Odyssey—yet certain subjects are taboo in him—above all digestive incidents & parallels & the mechanism of sex—

So, is it possible for some fool to call him responsible for all subsequent attitudes before & rejections of the 'mot bas'? For a new exercise in learned & fantastic folly. Soberly one can say this—that 'Homer' had to cut because of his first function as 'Kourotrophos' of a great race & their bringer out of barbarism.[9] The cults & the gods he does not celebrate were

[9] For kourotrophos, see Glossary.

there to keep them steady, after his cleansing sufficiently grubbed & re-sweetened by the earth.

Remember: The fire—after this 3 weeks' cold. Gabriel sitting up in bed against dark curtains looking at the fire of spring-flowers—"daffodils that come" [Shakespeare, *A Winter's Tale*]—at his side & his tea on his knees, a plateful of sweet cakes. For the compass' fourth point, me—"Look," he said. "Fire & flowers & food & my Cowslip."

The loss of a fountain-pen long known & trained & loved & the enforced use of a substitute is only to be compared with having to sleep with a man to whom one is indifferent by inevitable compulsion, one's lover being away.

26 April 1930 [Giverny]

Past months branded on me; alone here, without Gabriel. Two months away from the arms that blessed me; nearly two months hell of suffering—learning—solitude.

Remember: Discovery of [unidentified] Agathe Paléologue's devotion & loyalty; her understanding, appreciation.

Macaulay's *Literary Essays* & their antiseptic, heartening quarrelling with good sense.

1 May 1930 [Paris]

Dawn: Am still up, indulging myself for the past two hours in almost acting—telling out loud at least to myself—a fairy tale.

Final version of one I've rehearsed before with another [protagonist] & setting.

John Rodker would call it a dramatic compensation for a lost brother, foiled maternity, social position etc. So far it fits in perfectly with the freudian formulae under the circumstances.

Only, & here is the question, as yet unanswered for since we admit no knowledge but under scientific formulae, & on that line we have no further description or hypotheses—it rests unanswered—are such passionate seemings & desirings & 'makings'—which, as in this case, do not seem to matter that they won't 'happen' in that way on this earth—if no further meaning, have no further value or content than that of a game (in my case)—a kindly illusion (or deadly) in the rude ignorant.

Our business is to make the word flesh—as Shakespeare did—the 'word' of his love for his lover of the Sonnets ten times more 'flesh' once they were written; flesh made immortal there by use of words.

We are here 'au seuil du mystère' [on the threshold of the mystery]; that I know. Grant Freud for the superficial description; but someone well aware of [the sacred game/ritual] would say that this night's story telling was all preparatory image-making for the reality whose form will (may) be utterly different.

8 May 1930

Quentin Bell said, quoting his Aunt Virginia Woolf, that Lady Ottoline Morrell was "like a wreck left over from the spanish Armada."[10]

9 May 1930 dawn

Gabriel, as usual, has murdered sleep.[11] So one writes in order to murder Gabriel.

16 May 1930

Heavens! how glad I am to be alone, how I owe all my failure to want of proper interest in my own proper interests. Am worn out after 3 hours with Agathe translating my own book: after a chapter I got to loathe it, wonder why I had written it, while its memories made me 'émotionnée.'[12] If Agathe hadn't held me to it, I should have run home—while her sickness & courage & perseverance shamed me. I stick it out; I hope that the shame will stick.

Incidentally it appears that my prose 'runs' into german. Every other paragraph we are held up with a thought or a turn of thought not known in french, not to be known in french or only to be admitted in french by the back door of a paraphrase. An english felicity makes, if it goes at all, becomes nearly always a bald explanation—or too long, or an extrava-

[10] Lady Ottoline Morrell (1873–1938), British aristocrat. With her husband Philip Morrell (1870–1943) she opened her estate, Garsington Manor, to pacifists, writers, and artists during the First World War. She 'adopted' a number of writers, including Gilbert Cannan.

[11] Reference to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

[12] Translation probably of *Imaginary Letters*. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 480, note 294.

gance or an obvious translation. And where at the end is the style I've taken such years to control & vary, that virtuosity with my language where I thought I'd reached such a point that art concealed art?

And, already a premonition is growing up, of me translated, each work into german, read in Germany; of a school of me in Germany; of an aging me lecturing there complete with translation & only-too-profound attention; of professors driving me mad with the meaning of my meaning, & the kind of youth I don't at heart love only too ready to testify to "What Mary Butts Has Done For Me."

While, petulantly, I want Paris favours. My snobbism & my heart are here. [13]

21 May 1930

Remember: after no food for so long found the Bureau [de Change] & changed the rumanian note. Then there followed a Paris spring storm, a huge cloud, sun-bordered, & lots of rain striking the streets & breaking in water cups. Streets, glass-bright & clean. And with that money I sheltered in a baker's shop to watch this & ate 2 sorts of cake & 2 strips of custard tart. And when a taxi drew up outside, I dived into it, & so back to my quarter, drank verveine tea & listened to the rain sing & the people say the same things about it & being wet. ‡

‡USE THIS FOR "FELICITY'S DEATH?" THERE MIGHT BE PICKINGS ALL THROUGH THESE BOOKS.

23 May 1930

Life creeps hungrily—but the story flies.[14]

26 May 1930

Lunch at Agathe Paléologue: translation nearly done.

31 May 1930

These bad days—one's mind works, one can think as usual & feel. While it is just all one can do to put it down, a line here & there. But to externalise & create, one might as well be dead.

[13] German interest in Butts's work exists in her lifetime. See Butts to Glenway Wescott, Vernon, undated [August 1927]. Her 1934 story "A Lover" appeared as "Der Geliebte," in *Das grosse Frauenlesebuch IV*, trans. Dahms (Munich: Goldmann Verlag, 1994), 109–131. French translation of *Armed with Madness* forthcoming.

[14] Reference to Butts's story "In the House" (1938). At this stage she refers to the story as "Death of Felicity Taverner" and later incorporates elements of this situation into *Death of Felicity Taverner*.

4 June 1930

Gabriel, Gabriel mio—you have left death sitting on the throne where we were crowned with life.

Butts collapses from starvation and drug abuse. She is taken to her mother's flat at 3 Buckingham Gate, London, to recuperate. She will never leave England again.

7 June 1930 London

These outcries must stop. I must turn out from this pain—make a show of it to help myself. Work, you fool—you have a chance here, profit by it.

Gould, *Oddities: A Book of Unexplained Facts* [(1928)]: good miscellany.

End of FT [Felicity Taverner]. What is the end?

Remember: Home again. All the things of beauty I've known since I could first see & love 'as though they were persons.'

Books:
[Waugh's] Vile Bodies [(1930)]
One story by E. M. Forster about the Machine ["The Machine Stops" (1911)]. Then Nesta Webster's *Secret Societies* [(1924)].

27 June 1930

Reunderstood [Donne's] "Go & catch a falling star"—even the lines I liked least—"what wind/ Serves to advance an honest mind?"
This is rest. But it was Mother who saved me.

29 June 1930

Secret Societies: "It is curious to notice how Sir James Frazer . . . never once refers to one of the higher adepts, Jews, Rosicrucians, Satanists . . . The whole subject is treated as if it were the spontaneous outcome of primitive or peasant mentality."
This is profoundly true & for years has puzzled me & hindered me. Also Jane Harrison & almost Murray.

While the book is certainly worth attention, & events more & more seem to justify it. With all its imperfections, it serves me, at least, as a piece of stout twine in a maze.

1 July 1930

Remember: Mother's beauty (who says she is nearly 70!)—tonight in white & green, a string of jade beads & pearls. The long room sets her and she moves about it like a goddess.

■ ■ ■

19 November 1930 [Little Thornsdale, Sussex]

[On] 29 October 1930 Gabriel & I were married. Came here till the spring.[15]

Am very near the 'magical' truth of this country. For example—that in the valley orchard past Little Thornsdale it is always summer. It is a hollow land, & there the rabbits snub us, bobbing slowly away from us, scuts up.[16] And, in the lane towards Peasemarsh woods there is a tragic stretch—where it runs down the stream-bottom, before the sharp hill & the red manor house.

27 November 1930

To begin to work again—that is difficult. Already I've begun to live—here in the pearl-land with Gabriel. Already my mind & my imagination are stirring but a fear & fatigue 'prevent' me from writing down poetry or thought. And thoughts—ideas & poems swarm.

For discipline—I must put down something from now on each day under the heading "Remember."

[15] Butts and Atkin rent a farm (on which they work a little) from Atkin's friend, the British painter Gerald Reitlinger, who was also a friend of Kit Wood's. Coincidentally the British writer Antonia White rents the very same house in 1938.

[16] See 1924 note 10.

2 December 1930

I have an idea that here in this quiet some of my 'other side' perception may return & strengthened.

5 December 1930

Gabriel gone north [to Newcastle].

Remember: blue-crystal-opal day, night—just off the full moon—the land turned grey pearl. Black pearl even, the mist even, distributed so as to hide nothing but to coat each object with solid pearl.

Osty, *Supernormal Faculties in Man* [(1923)]

It seems that I might develop his 'metagnosis' in myself. I have touches of it in my first impact with persons, & these books are full of hints of it & attempts at co-relation between a variety of intuitions.

"Peace comes by strange ways" . . . from the seat across the fire I looked back at the table; the green persian bowl full of fruit on the dark polished wood & behind it the low dish set with sprigs of jasmine & periwinkle just showing over the shoulders of the apples.

Best Murders

Dorothy Sayers. [R.] Austin Freeman, [Anthony] Berkeley, Agatha Christie, [J. S.] Fletcher, [A. E. W.] Mason, [Joseph] Farjeon.[17]

11 December 1930

Remember: when we spoke last night of Jacques de Malleissye & I said that that strip of our tragedy had become tolerable because I had reduced it to art. And I say that only by that way would the others become tolerable also.

13 December 1930

Remember: yesterday, enchantment on the Marsh. First the pearl-day, then the swans, then across the grass to meet them again coming down stream—the absolute whiteness.

[17] Butts liked detective stories and indeed her *Death of Felicity Taverner* (1932) is a kind of detective story. She reviews a great deal of detective fiction during the 1930s, explaining her admiration for the genre in "Ghosties and Ghoulies," in *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings*, 333. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 481, note 11

And scatter wheeling in great broken rungs
Upon their clamorous wings . . .
Unwearied still, lover by lover . . . [AE, "Ancestry"]

Then—the green cliff that ends Oxney & on the other side of the isle marsh for ever. I have known all along that green cliff is one of the 'places,' a temenos [sacred enclosure]. England once began there.

14 December 1930

Enchantments & Other Poems [(1930)] AE

I begin to be jealous & restless because I have done more work than ever I have published. And not done enough. And am doing none. And so many others are doing what I could do better. O Daimones, bring me one gold chance & I promise that I will not miss it.

Books read of all sorts—with signatures, e.g. [Eddison's] *Egil's Saga* [(1930)] & today's I.L.N. [*Independent Labour News*], [Saki's] *The Chronicles of Clovis* [(1912)] & [E. F. Benson's] *The Life of Alcibiades* [(1928)]. The shocker on the same day as Philip Heseltine's death.[18]

[18] See 3 June 1919.

1931

7 January 1931 [Little Thornsdale, Sussex]

Three weeks omitted. Reasons—no maid, only the farm children. The work we have to do is not too hard & I get pleasure from its details, minute incidents & achievements which I feel that I could enjoy 'almost indefinitely.' It used to be like that, but long ago I could mix them with work, use them as its alternative. Now they seem to take all the making energy which either of us have; while I cannot lose myself in them, nagged with desire to work, a need to work because of money which nags me into impotence.

8 January 1931

This evening [Milton's] *Comus* broadcast [on the radio].

Always this country has something round the corner. It would be better to say that the Marsh has always one over the horizon. There is Appledore a mile & a half on the straight road past Stone Cliff.

You hear with shame your own opinion from Huxley's *Vulgarity in Literature* [(1930)].[1]

11 January 1931

Went to Appledore—one over the horizon. The Landlord at the Lion—pure Edgar Wallace.[2] Walland's marsh, Stone overhead. A friendly wind followed us there, knocked against us on the way back. The sun poured out a short measure of waxing strength until two purple cloud-lids shut on him. It is blowing from the west, warm for rain. We might stay in this land. From now on I look for a house.

[1] Butts is correcting her article on Aldous Huxley. See 1929, note 3. This is also a reference to Emerson, who wrote: "Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humoured inflexibility then most when the whole Cry of voices is on the other side. Else, to-morrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another." Emerson, "Self-Reliance," in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (London: Ward, Lock & Co, 1898), 15.

[2] Edgar Wallace (1875–1932), British thriller writer, playwright, and journalist.

17/8 January 1931

Remember: last night out in the gale. What is the faculty (which cannot be sight) which makes it seem to one that after walking a short time in the dark even the leaves & sticks deep down in the hedges are visible; that may go so far that one is almost persuaded that night is no darker than day? It cannot be sight. Unconscious memory?

The Tiepolo sky today: a Danaë shower on the Weald & the woods near it pure cobalt blue.

19 January 1931

Today, yesterday & two others, the 'perfect' days. By that one means just this that one has been able—had the grace—not to worry or fret, but to let go & let in all that there is to enjoy & bless.

22 January 1931

Remember: the green dyke-patch, colour of the stones Gabriel brought to me from Rye. Nature hurrying up after art.

27 January 1931

[Butts reads] Geley's *Clairvoyance and Materialisation* [(1927)].

28 January 1931

[From draft of letter to landlord of 14 rue de Monttessuy:]

J'espère me réinstaller là en mai prochain. [I hope to move back there next May.]

23 April 1931

Over two months 'and no rabbits [ideas] caught.' Work has seemed impossible & not doing it frets me. I hate the use—the tactile use of a pen. What has been done? Chess, music, Eddington's *Nature of the Physical World* [(1928)], some reading & Wells' questions about the state of man realised again & asked. Nervous health better. But the uncertainty of our prospects & our futures pushes through like coarse, poisonous shoots through the spring, out-of-doors, birds, friends, even Gabriel, thought, imagination.

But all the time, like a tapestry half-visible behind coarse films the pattern of one's proper life is visible, weaving serenely. That goes on happening, though I have to peer through at it.

The 'visible Pan' of this country in a series identical & unique. The Downs on our way to Brighton. The exquisite & incredible Gabriel at Easter. New cats. Idea of the Christopher book & last night's of the hero.[3] A partial & at intervals conquest of happiness—hours of complete serenity & the relief—as yesterday—of resolution.

The walk with Gabriel a week ago to Iden Castle.

For a title page. Eddington, *Nature of the Physical World*. "We are bound to claim for human nature that, either by itself or as inspired by a power beyond, it is capable of making legitimate judgments of significance."

25 April 1931

This evening's hail-storm.

This morning's gale & green boughs lashing on the panes. Wind screaming & rain travelling, memories of the sacred Wood & the Sea.

Thoughts of Harold Nicolson & the wind's pace & orchestra in one's body and, high up & outside it & through it the air of "Dinah Lee."[4] Old memories of the bird-catcher [Cocteau]; of a child; of Sergey Sergeyitch.

Distilled memories—of pain, of beauty, of becoming. Now become being; passed out of flight & change into what is.

12 May 1931 London

Remember: the first evening at the Fitzroy [Tavern]. Edgell [Rickword], Betty [Montgomery]: that contact.[5]

Butts often makes lists of books to be read; on this day she records the acquisition of the following: Baroness Burghclere, Strafford *(1931); Michael*

[3] Following the suicide of the painter Christopher (Kit) Wood on the 21 August 1930, his partner, Frosca Munster, asked Butts and other of his friends to contribute to a volume of remembrance about him. Never published, Butts's two-page article is a tribute both to Wood and to the power of the landscape in which they both grew up. See 14 June 1931.

[4] Harold Nicolson (1886–1968), British writer and broadcaster. Husband of the British writer Vita Sackville-West. The previous evening Butts and Atkin listened to Harold Nicolson's final broadcast on the radio.

[5] Edgell Rickword (1898–1982), British author and editor of Wishart's publishing house as well as Wishart's journal *Calendar,* which published Butts's story "The Later Life of Theseus, King of Athens," *The Calendar of Modern Letters*, 1, 4 (June 1925), 257–65.

Sadleir, Bulwer: A Panorama *(1931); Noel Coward*, Post Mortem *(1930); Stella Benson*, Tobit Transplanted *(1930); Chancellor*, The Prince Consort *(1931); Ouspensky*, A New Model of the Universe *(1931); André Siegfried*, England's Crisis *(trans. Hemming, 1931); Sachverell Sitwell*, Far From My Home *(1931).*

14 May 1931

Remember: [Hugh] Ross Williamson* & his brother. Praise. And this city from the train entering etched on the evening air.

15 May 1931 Newcastle [at Atkin's aunts' house, 10 Osborne Avenue]

I think of all the places where the spring is burning: in Newcastle-on-Tyne it is put out by coal. There is a war against green; asphalt driven hot across the grass.

[Reading] Alan Porter's poetry [*The Signature of Pain and Other Poems* (1930)].

28 May 1931

Naomi Mitchison's *Corn King and Spring Queen* (1931)—reasons for my despair here. Trees from this window be kind to me.

Yet I am glad to be here. It is a friendly house & my lover is with me. There are no ghosts.

I should like to bring my own.

Strachey's new book [*Portraits in Miniature and Other Essays* (1931)]—he sometimes parodies himself, but quel rappel à l'ordre [call to order]. It was because of his "high intellectual tradition" that I've had to make a Greek of myself.

29 May 1931

[Butts is drafting her first review for *The Bookman*:] *Corn King and Spring Queen*. I am sure that this is a book of very great importance; a book whose appearance is historical, which will mark an epoch in subject & endure as a work of art.

Miss Harrison did not realise the questions she had left unanswered

when she traced the rise of the year Boy & Girl, Kouros & Korê, their rise in religious speculation from Kêr to god, their shiftings between potency & hero.

The book is about the tribe of half-hellenised Scythians after the division of A[lexander]'s empire & before the rise of Rome.

There has never been anything like this book before. Their magic is real magic: the inventions are what took place: each person on the vast stage has his strict identity & ritual significance not stressed but shewn. It is an exciting story, whose excitement is absorbed by the interest of life. It is told from day to day, detail by detail & not in the least like a tapestry or a cinema.

3 June 1931

Remember: Gabriel on the floor before the fire last night, rubbing his wet hair. Gabriel in bed, on his side, his hands together, saying his prayers.

There are moments when dream perception & sequences suddenly come back & I am sure that those sleep-experiences, fully remembered would be a coherency & an explanation for things which have happened awake. Not a symbol, more likely the reality of what has happened here. If rest that—a clearer statement.

Whether or not, my mind will not hold them, either I can't write when the flash-back comes or—& anyhow—there is some incapacity in me for writing them down.

As there is about writing about any emotional experience: I have too many just now, & they almost all hurt.

10 June 1931

FOR A STORY: An old satrap hellenising himself for Alexander's benefit & suggesting him with the god-king.

12 June 1931

Good detective book: *Murder by Latitude* [(1930)], Rufus King

CORN KING AND SPRING QUEEN

Remember from it: the details, beauty, its kind of art, drawn, like Lucretius, from the material of science: its alexandrian part & the double kinds of paederasty: its 'visible Pan.'

14 June 1931

Eloge on Christopher [Kit] Wood.

To write about Christopher Wood is not to write about the two periods of our lives when we saw a great deal of one another. They are only there for reference, & the first is naturally the clearest. They began like half the best stories—'a few years ago, in Paris, in Spring.'

Now that he is not here any more to play with, one notices that Paris was incidental & what we were doing there. That is part of another story—a superb story but quite different. We were the only two english people in it, & inside it was another story which we did not tell each other as we did about everything else that happened.

We both came from the same part of England, the short turf & chalk hills which are like nothing else on earth. They sprawl across counties, & our history & the history of man is written on them in flint & bronze & leaf & grey stone. Written on very short grass full of small black & white snail-shells. A dry country of immense earth-works & monstrous pictures done on the chalk stripped of its grass. From Avebury [Wiltshire] to Stone Cliff [Sussex] it is the same, sprawled across a kingdom, the history of England open. Also its secret history in letters too large to read. Secrets whose simplicity appals. People bred there go away & do different things, but at some time they have read the too large letters, & it becomes their business to re-write them legibly & in characters of whatever it is that they have to do. And, if they are conscious people, it is best for them at times to realise this, to remember what they are & what they are doing, to return to the place whose fruit & flesh & grass & salted air, whose sap has grown the bodies they have to take about.

In that country without the least extravagance the seasons pass in & out in movements like a ballet. The year has four cardinal points & we remember spring most. Go to Paris for it if we can. But in Christopher's country the spring has a great deal to do, gets down to what it did before there was any Paris: before there were people: when people were not like the people of our masque, & every year the Sacre du Printemps is repeated there.

It was this that we knew without remembering, that we did not talk about. There was a night at the [Russian] ballet when I nearly said something to him about it, & next day he shewed me a drawing in the secret language & I could not read it; & we were having a most interesting life.

It was not as though one had ever questioned his pure quality. It was

him. It was there. And the place we came from knows how to pick out & bring back the boys it has chosen for the rites of spring.

Yesterday—on the hills above Chesters, under [Hadrian's] wall. A wolf's country. I was perpetually turning my head. Later I remembered I was on the Picts' side between the foss & the wall.

To-day there is savage rain again.

Yesterday 'I suddenly had a conviction'—what words are there for a particular kind of quiet, unreasoned certainty?—that my time here was nearly up. Between four years & three, with the accent on four. So it is necessary for me to write all I can, have all in order: live well, mostly tranquilly, live hard, be at peace.

This came, & on thinking it over, I remember that, when I was 18, Edith Geddes foretold a desperate illness in my early forties, & that over three years ago—Sandy said in the script—8 years.[6] I called on him [in a séance] the Sunday night ten days ago.

I have no idea how far my subconscious may have been affected by these points, but I was not 'thinking' about them, & have got over the shock about Gabriel.‡ I know now where I stand—in this life—& I love him. If I called him my last chance—did I believe it? He is innocent, & I may be mistaken but I don't think so. Am not at all afraid, pleased rather & confident. It seems as if there was a limit set. And there is a great deal to do & a step to take off. Peace. I only want not to be tantalised into stupidities by Philoctetes' wound. And to be what he needs & all we can be together. To get all that I can done: waste no more time: leave some name & a discovery. Then it would be "Nunc dimittis" [Luke, 2, 29]. That is strange to me. But it seems we should soon all be together on a new adventure, "poor lovers" quit of the "pains of this ghostly world."

This for a record that I have had this conviction.

‡See March–June 1935.

17 June 1931

Christopher [article] written & sent: Alexander in my mind. What happened is quite clear—how it happened is difficult. No properties that I

[6] Edith Geddes, Anglo-Indian companion of Butts's Aunt Agnes Briggs. Maitland's prediction is not far out—Butts dies in 1937.

can assemble. Try the Bee-priestess? (Drawings by Gabriel?) Or?—Or? Odysseus & Telegonos? A new Alexander at Siwa.[7]

18 June 1931

For these last two weeks it is as though I am conscious of 'something like' [Dunne's] serialism in every event of Life, but the consciousness is as difficult to pin down as to recall the dream from which one wakes. It is an 'awareness,' just below the threshold of consciousness.

ALEXANDER: "I am persuaded that there is no nation, city or people then in being where his name did not reach; for which reason, whatever origin he might boast of, and claim to himself, there seems to me to have been some divine hand presiding both over his birth & actions, in as much as no mortal on earth either excelled or equalled him." Arrian, [*Anabasis*].

End June 1931

STORIES FOR THE BOOK[8]

I "Scylla & Charybdis"
II "Later Life of Theseus"
III "The House-Party"
IV "Green"
V "After the Funeral"
VI "After Arbela"
VII "Clitus"
VIII "Olympias"
VIII "Change"
IX "Deosil"
X "Brightness Falls"
XI "The Dinner Party"

[7] Butts writes *The Macedonian* extremely quickly. Having had the idea by the 25 September 1929, she writes it during the summer of 1931. Atkin does indeed produce some illustrations for it. However they are mislaid by Eliot's office at Faber's. See 17 September 1931 (draft letter).

[8] All stories except VI–VIII were included in *Several Occasions* (1932). VI–VIII were incorporated into *The Macedonian*. "Change" is never republished.

(For the new book:) i "Alexander:" make 2nd draft: type
ii "Dinner Party:" copy corrections
iii "Brightness Falls:" correct
iv "House-Party"
v "S & C" ["Scylla and Charybdis"]
vi "After the Funeral:" re-copy; type.

1 July 1931

Inter secretoria. "Son absence constate sa présence . . ." I know—through when that happened last night—that if I could see the moments & times of my life which mattered, which have that constant significance—as one sequence & unity—that all fear would go, & without fear everything would be possible.

Remember: Gabriel's touch on my hand when they played that song in the theatre.

8 July 1931

Jacques de Malleissye is dead. Achilles' set less by one more. So much for Heartbreak House.

11 July 1931

It is less than a month since I began Alexander [*The Macedonian*].
An excellent book: *Old Patch's Medley* [(1930)] by Marjorie Bowen.

Rossetti [(1928)] by Evelyn Waugh—our young man with a future:
"The romantic outlook sees life as a series of glowing & unrelated systems, in which the component parts are explicable & true only in terms of themselves, in which the stars are just as big & as near as they look, & 'rien n'est vrai que le pittoresque.'
It is this insistence on the picturesque that divides, though rather uncertainly, the mystical from the romantic habit of mind."
Here, anyhow, is a mind that will never be content with less than the truth of things.

Evelyn Waugh on Rossetti: "He was typically Bloomsbury bred in his attitude to the country. When he tries to express his delight in some natural beauty it is nearly always by comparison with something artificial."

Cf. old [William] Morris: "O me! O me! How I love the earth & the seasons & the weather, & all things that deal with them, & all that grows out of them" [*News from Nowhere*].

What one says to oneself of the unfavourable critic: "Drunk again."

Χαριστεριον [a thank-offering] to Gabriel.[9]

Remember Rebecca West in the DT [*Daily Telegraph*] on the film-star substitute for the gods (used later: Traps for Unbelievers).

Longing—Ιμερον. What I have learned to notice up here; & what is, according to [Gilbert] Murray, a necessary quality to make art—"the yearning of the whole dumb body to express . . . emotion—the Greeks would say that 'longing,' ιμεροσ—for which words, harp & singing are not good enough. The word constantly applied to all good singing & harping is ιμεροεισ not merely 'beautiful,' but possessing that sort of beauty which makes the heart yearn. Ιμεροσ & ρυδον [flowing/abundant/copious] . . ."

[At 105, Oakley St.,] Chelsea [south-west London] with Gabriel.

Remember: Last night: nocturne: Chelsea. Gabriel in this chair, I in bed. Grey & black & white & silver light, fused (his hair: my arm).

4 September 1931

Chelsea: I retract what I have said about it. I like it. I have almost fallen in love with it. It is like a country town—if it were not for the buses in the King's Road. Windy from the river, & full of lanes & passages & walled gardens & trees. Rebuilding is being done in keeping. The shops are small, gay, individual & friendly. There is one that sells fruit that is like a bower in a cave. A long, irregular roof like a shed, dark inside, but running out on to the pavement, the long, sloping fruit counters. On the right potato heaps & coarse vegetables: then a slot then a range of fine vegetables & next them, commoner fruit. A slot. A narrow shelf of fine fruit. Then, in the far left corner, a stand of flowers.

[9] This dedication to Atkin in *The Macedonian* is probably also a tribute to Harrison, who used this word when dedicating *Prolegomena* to Gilbert Murray.

One goes there naturally, with pleasure & different anticipations.

Read *The Sittaford Mystery* [(1931) by] Agatha Christie—& that's all I can get out of *The Observer*.

And *Ellen Terry & Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence* [ed. St John (1931)].

8 September 1931

MS "View of the Present State in the West."[10]

It was the pride & wonder of my life & should do. The question is how to revise it, omit Tony [Butts] & too personally, Walter [Shaw]; transform slang & sentiment without losing its vitality. Turn passion into art without killing it. I think it can be done. But here my devil of nervous mistrust comes in. I'm afraid of the candour & 'dash' with which I wrote it: which are in the same form essential to it. Afraid of the first person—of people reading the "I"s & saying: "Mary Butts thinks this." This is Bunk. I believe as much as I ever did what I said there. Now I shiver at slips, worse still—at my own enthusiasm & wonder how I could have been so bold, so shameless, credulous, so expose myself. Rot. I will be hearty about it till I become or make myself—the process is not clear—sure of myself again.

Suggestions: The introduction is too long & repetitive. Revise & turn the whole, which it practically is already, into the form of an Imaginary Letter, to Walter for focus & friendship, but a screened Walter.

Yeats speaking from Belfast [on the radio].
Remember: "—but only God, my dear,
Gabriel Can love you for yourself alone
Not for your yellow hair."
["Oedipus at Colonus"]

9 September 1931

MS called now, for the present, Walter's book. Summary as it stands.

The world to be regarded in historic sequence, & our Western civilisation, as an organism.

The 'Western World' our world.

[10] Butts writes this two years earlier, see 26 August 1929.

An outline account of it. Hellenic origins. The 'tone' we recognise. 3,000 run over to Aug [19]14. The mind to run over: then stand & look.

Assumed that the whole is an Organism.

Assumed that there is 'virtus' in it.

That the virtue is 'progress' consists in our striking out of new generalisations, tried & found fruitful.

That in the things which distinguish us from other animals we have found use & pride. That the ball was started rolling again about 1400 by the rediscovery of our origins, called classical. Then we became aware that we were an organism with its end in its beginnings.

The biologic speed with which this has happened.

And why did the savages that we were prefer this effort?

What happens is this. Man gets control of things to avoid famine; & once famine is avoided, his energies are set free. Then, those released energies control nature still more, & rouse up more enemies in her. While our control over ourselves has not advanced proportionately. 'Homo faber' has out-distanced 'homo sapiens,' a man running a losing race with himself. One observable fact, that the Organism & its organisms are liable to sudden releases, outbursts of individual or single energy—which is the way things are done. All our activities follow this constant law.

(This should be the key sentence. Such times are the source of life's value. The implications of this.) stet.

(make clearer) The effort today, post-war, undigested-knowledge-fatigue to explain these releases away. (enlarge)

(Dangers, however, of relying on a theory of inspiration, "where any sort of meaning looks intense" [Browning, "Fra Lippo Lippi"].) Necessity ties man to facts. Homo faber. Bacon's *Novum Organum*: inductive reasoning. Kant, whose statement about the unknowableness of reality, man has left alone. The pious thought that religion is:

The plain man went ahead & made things on Bacon's formula:

A man like Blake claimed a revelation. (None of the 3 positions will work to-day). Sullivan's analysis. Non-Euclidean geometry: relativity mathematics. Round again to Kant. Now known to mathematicians only, & only mathematically, there is a new universal generalisation in existence (enlarge. Eddington). We have to discover that conception in human terms: a new generalisation which shall say it: that will put the plain & the pious in their places, justify them where they have earned it, & take the fantasy out of speculation.

Get *Greek Thought and the Origins of the Scientific Spirit* [(trans. 1928)] Léon Robin.

Then the new physics—demand a new generalisation or simplification, which means a new perception, in us.

The birth of such a new simplification precedes & accompanies a release of his energy. Its symptom is a sense of momentary release from time. And this world has its correspondence in the new physics.

Observations of mysticism. Its constants. Personal experience. Religion explained by Westermarck, Jane Harrison, Nemi (add to these).[11] (The point is the unexplained vitality, fruitfulness of the Golden Bough & its relations) cf. Religion of the Semites.

Religion & mistranslation & a translation of the Constants of one experience. Stet. Faith lost in the original with the translation.

The religious question, the question.

The scientific attitude absolutely right, where it is meant to be right. Comparison of the alphabet & [Milton's] *Comus*.

Comparison of religions even & art. 'Tantum religio.'

But religion at its pure start, of which our organism is full of exquisite examples, is the agent which frees us from the time-sense. We have the science of its mechanics. What is needed now is the science of it. Again, the bad state of the men of our time in this respect. Stet.

The Organism again. Its fragility.

In its creative moments, homo faber rather at a discount. His triumph in the War & after it. (Our age 'let down.' The 21st birthday our fathers gave us.) Heartbreak House. No reason why the Bough was called Gold.

Pessimism. Our damnation through mis-use of our power.

[11] Edvard (Alexander) Westermarck (1862–1939), Finnish anthropologist and scholar. Developed field study methods in social anthropology. Famous for his thesis *The History of Human Marriage* (1891, later edition 1922) in which he demonstrated—in contradistinction to Darwin—that the matriarchate was not a stage of human development and that universal promiscuity was a myth. Westermarck argued against the belief that moral judgements are true or untrue propositions about moral facts. Lake Nemi, east of Rome, site of the "the sacred grove and sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis, or Diana of the Wood." Ceremonial worship of Diana explored in the opening pages of James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (New York: Random House, 1981), 2, 1–6.

This section is to be statements of personal & impersonal experiences which have led to belief & faith (subset 2 & 1). Actions which have been translations of outside time experiences.

Pudding-proof. This is science.

(Then I return to our Organism) (why?) Pessimism. The 'sacred game' off. America.

Optimism—my experiences in mysticism—essentially within its varieties a common & universal one. William James. Constants of mystical experience, Loyola, Mahomet, & Newton.[12] All translations of a constant. "For the mystical quality is of all grades & species."

Back to Hellas. The Mystery Cults.

A deliberate effort to form & elicit the mystical impulse & develop the outside time sense.

Then service to Christianity. Orphism. Even a materialistic explanation argues a common origin. Moral strain of materialism stet. Repeat about the old possibilities re-opened with the new physics stet. A list:

Pythagoras to Clerk Maxwell.[13] Plato's Party still going on. stet.

Parenthesis: the importance of classical studies.

This historic continuity of an impulse, called a Race: possibly a lost race. People to-day uneasy & part aware. 'Men of good will' divided or partial or quack remedies.

A parenthesis on what happened at a Mystery Shrine (Place?).

Optimism conditioned on our learning another way of thinking. Signs of a general growth of this. Dunne.

Man's advance. The timelessness of great & significant facts. Where is Clerk Maxwell's influence? Not in art an out of date book. Invisibility of Wood, Unbuttoning or Pomp. Yet their reality.

I am supposed by now to have shewn that man is at the threshold of extended consciousness. (That science has prepared him by its katharsis. Then, that by this being so, he will return to his ancient aims & rational morals, because their real validity has now been reassured him.)

[12] St. Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), Spanish saint. Founded the Jesuit order (1534). Mahomet (570?–632), the Prophet and founder of Islam. Sir Isaac Newton (1643–1727), English physicist and mathematician.

[13] James Clerk Maxwell (1831–79), Scottish physicist, creator of electromagnetic theory of light.

Our Organism has implied a compact. Are we producing people consciously outside? A new form of egoism with a preference for incognito?

(Why not put all this in the form of a question?)

On the divinity of man; greek handling & christian—the ways of his realisation made difficult. Our men of ill-will atavistic. Rarity of historic masters for examples.

If such people exist, they have their dance (cf. [Powell's] *Afternoon Men* [(1931)] out of Huxley's *Antic Hay* [(1923)]; cf. John Buchan's works. Personal experience. What do they really amount to?)

Final reasons for calling our sacred game, a Race. Which we may not win, & which in order to win we need a science, now a justified possibility, of mysticism.

How much connected sense is there in all this?

Draft of letter (c.17 September 1931) to Ross Williamson, who has read the manuscript of The Macedonian *and has suggested offering it (with its illustrations by Gabriel Atkin) to T. S. Eliot at Faber's. The drawings are somehow lost. Eliot rejects the MS.*[14] *Wishart to publish a volume of stories by Butts.*

24 September 1931

The kind of day on which one would write a masterpiece if one could think of a masterpiece to write.

[14] This is not Eliot's only refusal. In January 1932 he declines Butts's request for him to write an introduction to a British edition of *Ashe of Rings,* which Desmond Harmsworth (where Wyn Henderson is the editor) is interested in publishing. Despite his apparent admiration for the novel, Eliot refuses (which presumably leads to Harmsworth's loss of interest in the republication)—on the grounds that he does not provide introductions to living authors, except for Pound. This must have made his introduction to Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1936) all the more galling to Butts. At the end of the year Edgell Rickword suggests to Butts that Wishart republish *Ashe of Rings*. See Eliot to Butts, 1 January 1932 and Rickword to Butts, 5 December 1932, Butts papers.

[2] October 1931

And for days I have been remembering [William Morris'] *The Sundering Flood*, or rather the emotion it roused when I read it as a child, & its connection with Sandy [Cecil Maitland].

Personal Experiences of Supernormal Perception

I. Clairvoyance: very little. When I was eighteen, on the Fifeshire beach, but that was more disorganised vision, a whirling in the air, & awareness.

The moment after I heard of Cecil's death. (God knows what that was, but it corresponds more or less with description of clairvoyance.)

'Seeing' Cecil go into the concierge's loge.

The change of scene on the lawn behind Lincoln's Inn Fields.[15]

The green man under the arbutus bush in the gale I saw when I was seven.

(Crystal-gazing etc., no use; makes me feel strange & sick.)

II. Clair-audience: none that I remember, but bells affect me, have brought an awareness to what was strictly invisible.

III. Sense of touch: two or three times in my life, once lately & in Paris, I have been constantly startled by what felt like a touch, on my arm & shoulder. No awareness went with it but curiosity & surprise. Nor am I at all sure that there was anything supernormal about them.

IV. General 'Awareness': This by far the most common. This awareness seems to overlap, to include 'spots' of other classified experiences; but it is sufficient in itself. I'm then, as Emerson says, "in vision," & such moments have had enormous importance in my life. Their memory slips in & out like fish, not their effect.

V. Telepathy: Variable, sometimes frequent, insignificant. I believe I am more aware always than my conscious mind will admit, or 'let me notice' of what people are thinking or about to say.

VI. Automatic Writing: Have been able to do it for years, do it very rarely now since the extraordinary spell after Cecil's death.

[15] The basis of Butts's powerful short story, "Brightness Falls" (1932).

VII. Future 'Awareness': Sometimes very strong, on Dunne's pattern. Conversation ahead, which may be telepathy; of minor events. Doubtful about my dreams, though for some weeks I kept a strict record. This leads to what men called 'Signatures.'

11 October 1931

Sent [poems] to Mr Bhat: "Heartbreak House," "Thinking of Saints and of Petronius Arbiter," "Douarnenez," "Picus Martius."[16]

Sent to Zukofsky: "Corfe," "Thinking of Saints," "The American Child."[17]

Experiences of Supernormal Perception (continued).

(Here we get more to business. And will it be adequately finished?)

VIII. Signatures: These, in old writers & in moderns like Strindberg's crossed sticks in the Rue Cardinal le Moine—are hints, coincidences, prophetic or retrospective of a significant event.[18] To try & describe them is delicate work. It usually appears that the more significant the event, the more there are of them, but that may only be because in the case of such an event, especially if it touches on the supernormal, our perceptions are sharpened. There is the proverb "Coming Events." And "When beggars die there are no comets seen" [Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*]. I have, it sometimes seems, a continual—continual at least over periods—awareness of these signatures, a way which cannot be all coincidence or imagination. Compare the story "Brightness Falls" for the use of them arbitrarily. Omens in the ancient world implied them, a subject that needs re-treatment. Countless ghost-stories illustrate them. A signature, observed before the event, has often made me uneasy. Perhaps my commonest experience of them is with books. If a subject has 'come up,' or I have read or heard about it so that it fills my mind with significance, time after time, a remark, an illustration or a book has turned up unsought, but as if it were round the oddest-angled corner, so that I follow the subject

[16] All four poems published in *Soma*, 3 (1932), 41–6.

[17] "Corfe" printed in *An Objectivist's Anthology*, ed. Louis Zukofsky (le Bausset, Var, France, 1932), 36–9. Butts is misnamed "Marie" Butts in the *Anthology*. A copy of *An Objectivist's Anthology* together with *Ashe of Rings* and *Traps for Unbelievers* is included in an exhibition held in Paris on 11 March 1959 and titled "Les Années Vingt: Les Ecrivains Américains à Paris et Leurs Amis." See H.D. papers.

[18] In Strindberg's *Inferno*, see 22 August 1918.

up, farther than I knew I could go. This is awkward, but accurate. En passant one says "there are signatures about," or "the signatures are out." Then comes a sensation very difficult to describe; as though one were at an exciting eavesdropping. Then, that one's best attention is inadequate, that if only one's perception could be sharpened a very little more, one would see everything from a new angle of perception. Which one just can't. Probably because one's brain is not quite the right instrument. That is the sensation. But Dunne is right. One's awareness is usually haphazard. I have walked blindfold into tragedy. Sometimes in retrospect I have remembered signatures, but more often not. All ghost stories of a phantom or an animal appearing or crying at the point of death in a family or house, the banshee etc., are instances of this.

IX. I have a kind of ambidextrous time sense; in certain states I will confuse my analysis of the present into immediate past & immediate future, & use them interchangeably. I suppose I'm not able, psychologically, to do so in english, but in french, which I know well, I have often been laughed at for using hier [yesterday] for demain [tomorrow]. My friends said it was my 'magic' sense.

This is connected with certain states when I seem to feel time stationary, all one, like space, as it appears to us. A strange, strictly awful sense, & one of great power & peace. Certain poetry can evoke it in me, as poetry can evoke most things, but my ultimate experience of poetry & its power is that.

25 October 1931

Remember: two or three 'delightful' days. Sequences of work & Gabriel & quiet & books & a friend or so & some wine.[19] Good thoughts, good imagination, good sleep.

Experience of Supernormal Perception (contd)

X. A perception I have only lately noticed in myself & which must be connected with IX. In childhood certain lines & phrases from poems struck me—with irrational force—seeing that I had as yet no experience

[19] Meeting new friends, e.g., Hugh Ross Williamson, but also older friends such as Ethel Colburn Mayne, to whom Butts drafts a letter in her journal at this time: "My dear, Is there anything better in life than to return to something one has loved & to find it far lovelier than even one's best memories?"

to justify their effect. Lately a whole series of these has risen in my memory, almost as a series—for they have never been quite dormant; & I have seen that my life has been conditioned by an experience of their truth. Having, in the usual way, delayed several days in making this note, a number that I had intended to write down have escaped again. For these I will leave a space. The first I remember now:

'God help us, for we knew the worst too young' [Kipling, "Gentlemen-Rankers"]. (As a child I laughed at myself for being haunted by that because I knew perfectly well that I didn't know the worst.)

"He that loveth maketh his own the grandeur that he loves." (Sung to Hoffman's "Baccarole" & mixed with my best love adventures.)

"And you take with shame your own opinion from another" [Emerson, "Self-Reliance"].

The opening of Jeremiah, & the 2nd Isaiah: "Here am I, send me" & "Ah Lord God, I am a child."

Why should these perceptions be called supernormal? If at all because they had a force in them of future awareness; they were outside the time sequence of normal experience; a constant outside time.

XI. A general state: in which any of the ten enumerated may be present, a perception of a change or clarification in everything about me, & in myself; a kind of vision, as when one says, "there is magic about." Almost always this has been wholly wonderful & delightful; but I do not know the right words. It happens, I think, more often out of doors.

(reminded on leaving the Blue Lantern)—"and dance again in the dancing place."

"O thou who plumed with strong desire" [Shelley, "The Two Spirits: An Allegory"]. All the atmosphere of that poem.

6 November 1931

[From draft letter to Mrs Henderson, editor at Desmond Harmsworth:][20]

What about this idea—my mind's been running on it for months. Substitutes today in the popular mind and in all our minds for the ideas &

[20] Wyn Henderson, manager and editor on several private presses including Nancy Cunard's Hours Press and Crowley's Aquila Press (see 22 March 1932) and Harmsworth Press. Close friend of Peggy Guggenheim, whose secretary she had been.

practices of religion, community-singing, cults of success, antiseptics, psycho-analysis. (That would get in 'pathological prose.')[21]

18 November 1931

Remember: last Thursday (and more shame to me not to have written this before.) Ethel Colburn Mayne to dinner, the low, linked laughter between the three of us—like Mozart. All that it has been to be with her again.

What I became aware of listening to Ethel, not only the argument & the voice, but all of her, the impact of her love & wit & imagination. An experience I shall never lose & learn to use again with other people.

The harmony between Gabriel & I was her work, & the next day's joy & the life's memory.

24 November 1931

From draft letter to editor, Richard Johns, of Pagany, *who published her story "The House Party" (1927) in response to copies of the journal containing other stories & poems, included without her knowledge:*

I am still at a loss to know how it was sent to you, especially now I see you have included the story "Scylla & Charybdis," which I had even less idea was in your possession.[22] However I am very glad you like them & will certainly send you some more. Meanwhile, I await your cheque.

Douglas Goldring Dedication [in *Several Occasions*].
"O Saisons O Chateaux" [by Rimbaud]
[Donne's] "Go & catch a falling star"[23] ‡

Butts has a Cocteau drawing of her made into a Christmas card. Recipients to include:

‡None of the lovely or enchanting words or "Fancies Chaste and Noble" [title of play by John Ford] would do. It went without. 17 September 1932.

[21] See 29 January 1932.

[22] These were probably included at the suggestion of Virgil Thomson.

[23] Butts recognised early on the enormous significance of her friendship with Goldring: "I know that meeting you has been coincident with my luck turning. It has been more than incidental—you have done so much for my shaky belief in myself." Butts to Goldring, 14 August 1922, Goldring papers, University of Victoria.

Gabriel's mother; Aunt Anne; Roderick Meiklejohn; MCH [Mary Colville-Hyde, Butts's mother]; Val Goldsmith; Poppy [Vanda]; Ethel; Douglas; Ross Williamson; Oswell Blakeston; Aunt Ada; Nina [Hamnett]; Charley Grey; Violet [Hunt]; Agathe Paléologue; Angus Davidson;* Maynard Keynes; Tommy Earp.[24]

18 December 1931

"When modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the state change with them." Plato, cit. C. Gray, *History of Music* [(1928)]. Consider this.[25]

23 December 1931

Religions and Hidden Cults of India [(1931)]. George MacMunn.

Good book. Just now I had a moment of 'seeing' how the varieties of Hinduism are possible. Once you have the 'seeing' in yourself, the power of immediate translating of everything, fact & fancy into the divine, & a mind or imagination, of sufficient quality, anything that exists will do. This is impossible to say in straight prose. (And that is why the straight prose of science can't say everything; a fact which should be scientifically recognised, we are using the wrong instrument for complete description, let alone understanding.)

I suppose I must go on with this until I get something of value.

'Sakti'—the female side of a cult.[26]

Remember: this year's Christmas cards along the shelf: change in general taste & variations inside taste. The old priest's card (of a fashionable church), the arts friend, the business friend, the old-fashioned gen-

[24] Atkin's mother had emigrated to America when he was a young man. Sir Roderick Meiklejohn (1876–1962), senior British civil servant and friend of Atkin's. Charley Grey, unidentified friend who was one of the witnesses at Butts's and Atkin's wedding.

[25] Butts, who knew the composer Cecil Gray (father of H.D.'s daughter Perdita) in her twenties, reviews Gray's biography of their mutual friend, Peter Warlock/Philip Heseltine in "Two Artists," *Time and Tide*, 15, 45 (10 November 1934), 1430.

[26] Sakti: A name of the Hindu goddess Parvati, associated with sexual energy but also with the female aspects of the universe in general.

tlewoman, the cultivated aunt, the fashionable young man (Oswell Blakeston!)[27]

For a story: On the Harpy Tomb—in which a hermit lived. Ross Williamson's idea. Not Anatole France.[28]

For a story (done) "After the Funeral."

[27] Oswell Blakeston (born Henry Joseph Hasslacher) (1907–85), writer, critic, and editor of *Seed*. Blakeston lived in Mousehole with the painter Max Chapman and was a friend of Butts's from 1931 onwards and admirer of her work. See Blakeston, "The Responsibility of the Public," *The Bookman* (October 1933), 15–6. After her death he published a small tome in which "Poet's hour" with its characters Mary and David seems to be inspired by Butts and Atkin in Sennen. See Blakeston, *Boys in their Ruin and Others* (London: The Fortune Press, 1949), 66–7. Blakeston continued to celebrate her work, reviewing *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* and *Imaginary Letters* when they were first republished in the 1970s: See Blakeston, "Plutarch's Siren," *Books and Bookmen*, 16, 6 (March 1971), 29. "Dangerous Enchanter," *Gay News*, 245 (25 November–8 December 1982), 30–1. "The Lady Who Enchanted Cocteau," *Little Caesar*, 12 (1982), 19–22.

[28] Butts's story "The Hermit and the Harpy-Tomb" remains unpublished. Butts is no doubt wishing to distinguish her story from Anatole France's novel *Thais*, which also concerns the fall from grace of an early Christian ascetic.

1932

2 January 1932 [105, Oakley St, London]

Remember: opening of the French Exhibition [at the Royal Academy, London]. Went with Douglas Goldring.

One hour's matchless joy & with the best of companions, The Manets of the Goya period, the late flowers in a jar. The Cézanne portrait, the Pissarro in the snow. The Watteaus, the Poussins.

It is an exquisite thing to find old friendship, renewed, never altered, indestructible, & to enjoy it at such a show as that. We went, as he said, to love & understand, not to shew off. And that I was like a good child with a new rattle.

15 January 1932

Remember: the French Exhibition [visited with Ethel Colburn Mayne].

Discovery today, Chassériau. And how Delacroix & Poussin are related. Also a sea-piece & a river-piece by Berthe Morisot.

Would one ever tire of Corot? Only in the sense that one could not live on honeycomb only, even off Hymettus.[1] But he seems to make Monet, for example, a much poorer painter by comparison. Yet I could not like much his open air nudes. But—but—but—there are three, Provence, Italy, northern France—Purifiez nos coeurs [James, 4, 9].

Copies of "Various Occasions" [renamed *Several Occasions*. Wishart to send to] Betty Montgomery, Ezra Pound, Ford Madox Ford, Violet Hunt, Ethel Colburn Mayne, Hugh Ross Williamson, Roderick Meiklejohn, Tony Butts.

Me (6) Val Goldsmith, Douglas Goldring, Oswell Blakeston, [Gabriel's] Aunt Anne [Weir], Tom Swan [Butts's lawyer and trustee].

In late January 1932 Butts and Atkin move to Sennen Cove, Cornwall, the most westerly inhabited village in England. Until mid-May their home is a rented bungalow called Sarah's Well on the side of the cliff overlooking Whitesands Bay and the Atlantic beyond.

25 January 1932 SENNEN COVE

Gabriel 1st thoughts: "There suspended like a pot
Hangs the clock that doesn't go."

[1] Hymettus: a mountain near Athens famous for its bees and excellent honey.

But Remember: how we are suspended here above the cove, looking out to nothing but the reef they call Cow Hole [Cowloe] & the sea. The sea. The sea like a blue tiger lying on its side, stretching out a paw. The yellow not the blue-green flame of the grass. That the sea breaking under cliffs would be the world's chief wonder if it only happened in one place. The herring gulls that came to visit us. Eyes down in the Cove & the shape & substance of the lobster pots. The first-night's walk, the full moon rising, shining through the wheels of the keltic crosses in St Sennen's churchyard. I think with Montague [M. R.] James that there are things about in Cornwall at night that are better not talked about.

29 January 1932

Last night's dream, out for the evening—to dinner—with Lytton Strachey.

Which will never happen again.[2] One is curiously made. I realised when I woke that I send off the proofs of the Harmsworth pamphlet [*Traps for Unbelievers*] relieved that now it can never fall under his ironic scrutiny. And that I shall feel this again . . .

The people of the Cove are all cousins & watchful & hate foreigners (Mrs Roberts was born in Ireland & only lived here 22 years). Their funerals where the corpse is carried & everyone goes. (Find out more.)

1 February 1932

To-day—*Horae Aurae* [Golden Hours]—On the cliffs to St Just. Remember: the small farm with the bar, the sunk turf before the storehouse, a hollow wave, the memory of something mediaeval, or of something once known & forgotten, something with mystery to it.

The sand blown inland, an unchancy place. The hill rising, red with dead bracken, where we kissed each other. The valley with the trees before St Just.

St Just—3000 year Cornish mining place. That there was something cold & malignant about it, only size & cleanness, & it was somehow bitter clean—separating it from the north [of England], from S. Shields or Wallsend.

The landlord of the King's Arms & what he had to say about the peo-

[2] Lytton Strachey died on 21 January 1932.

ple of St Just. Mining economics, phthisis & S Africa. An unfriendly, curious town; children stunted & with animal faces, 600 men on the dole. One mine, now partly shut after the 1919(?) disaster, 180(?) fathoms deep out 3 miles(?) under the sea. (Figures shaky.) The lovely ores he shewed us. A likeable man—no Cornishman. There is a brutal, bull-necked, full-bodied blooded type about here—& plentiful from what I saw in St Just. Morals, one hears, to match.

The church. An antiquity, my God! Very few tombs or tablets. The wall-paintings.

Remember: Jonquils [Scilly whites] in Penzance & their scent, that scent in which is all passion & all spring.

[From draft of letter to Douglas Goldring:]

When you saw me at the French Exhibition I was almost crying because I was going away, & it was the last time I should see them again all together in one place, ever in my life. But here it is so exquisite & so wild & strange, that we're glad to be alive in it.

Do you know the Church at St Just? You of all people most certainly do but they surprised us as the whole building did, with its exquisite capitols & stony desolation & traces of past splendour & what remains of its frescoes. "Most important," as Roger Fry used to say of the casual still-lives on the luncheon table.

I'm glad we met again & at the French show. There are so many things I want to tell you. I've a book coming out in March & 2 pamphlets, but this last year I've written more & I think better than I've ever done. Nor have I forgotten what I owe you.

6 February 1932

Days at Thornsdale were a string of beads, dusk & light (& all the greens) green glass? What is the Sennen string made of? Another transparency?

Finished Jounguet's *Macedonian Imperialism* [(1928)]. That settles a sequel on the Ptolemies, & I can go on all my life with an aching curiosity unsatisfied about them. The earth is still full of their names, & we know nothing whatever about them. But there is still "Pythangelos Harbour"—about the best thing that I got out of the book—(which is all of value) except my own intuition on Alexander & on Ptolemy confused.

9 February 1932

To-day it was the Aphrodite Sea. Almost Botticelli's, but too high, for its winter. The cliffs in the gold dawn, pure Mediterranean, siren water. I'm glad Pytheas of Massilia sailed this way.[3]

‡ Desmond MacCarthy's *Portraits* [(1931)]: Of all its ex- ‡For Ethel Colburn Mayne
cellencies this is the chief when you have read it, you are left with an increased sense of the dignity of man, his worth & greatness—in his diversity. Renan, Strindberg, O.B. [Oscar Browning] stand in their own, enclosed in a common light.[4]

East wind all day, almost unbearably cold, & in the morning a snow-flurry. Air like being inside a crystal, & huge gold clouds piled over the Atlantic, last night there were coloured towers. Racking wind & strong sun fighting it out. Night & under the falling offshore wind, the sea is quiet. It is the wind's turn, or am I confusing their voices? Yes, one is answering the other, neither too loud.

Can't 'get' Ross Williamson's story on the hermit in the Harpy Tomb. It stays inert, not 'perched' as Ethel said. Dr [Richard] Garnett's way?

12 February 1932

Remember: Sharp crystal air on the bare fields, whose spaces are 'charged', but not like english fields.

I cannot work & I want to. I have no patience & am ashamed not to have it. Is it the fault of [Wilde's] *Dorian Gray*, re-read after 16 years & I dare say that I still find it a good book?

15 February 1932

[For a story:] Ford's Party. Lett & the Baroness & my roses.[5]

[3] Pytheas of Massilia, fourth-century b.c. astronomer, mathematician, geographer, and traveller into the northern seas.

[4] Charles Otto Desmond MacCarthy (1877–1952), British literary journalist and editor of *The New Statesman* (1920–7) and *Life and Letters* before it was bought up by Bryher in 1932 when the editorship passed to Robert Herring.

[5] Butts's story, "The Master's Last Dancing" (1998).

16 February 1932

Remember: 5 o'clock this morning. Pallor—not even that—a numinousness in the east, as if it had been behind the stars, & they changed colour in front of it.

Night rising. We are hanging inside a pearl.

English Prose. Yeats' Introduction to Hone's *Berkeley* [(1931)].

"The sense of what is permanent, as distinct from what is useful, for what is unique & different, for the truth that shall not prevail, for what antiquity calls the sphere as distinct from the gyre, comes from solitaries or from communities where the solitaries flourish, Indians with a begging-bowl, monks where their occupation is an adventure, men escaped out of machinery, improvident men who sit by the roadside & feel responsible for all that exists:

> Do thou not grieve or blush to be
> As all inspired or tuneful men
> And all thy great forefathers were from Homer down to Ben
> [Cowley, "Destinie"].

Born in such community Berkeley with his belief in perception that abstract ideas are mere words, Swift with his love of perfect nature, of the Houyhuhums, his disbelief in Newton's system & in every sort of machine. Goldsmith with his delight in the particulars of common life that shocked his contemporaries, Burke with his conviction that all states not grown slowly like a forest true are tyrannies, found in England the opposition that made their thought lucid or strung it into expression. . . . The romantic movement with its turbulent heroism, its self-assertion, is over, superseded by a new naturalism that leaves man hopeless before the contents of his own mind. One thinks of Joyce's *Annalivia Plurabelle,* Pound's *Cantos*, works of a heroic sincerity, the man, his active faculties in suspense, one finger beating time to a beat sounding & echoing in his own mind, of Proust, who still fascinated by Stendhal's fixed framework seems about to close his eyes & gaze upon the pattern under the lids. This new art which has arisen in different countries simultaneously seems related as were the three telegrams to the three bodies, that form of the new realist philosophy which thinks that the secondary & primary qualities alike are independent of consciousness . . ."

And so on in such prose that is unique, & leaves one tremulous with awe & with delight.

‡Mencken on Blake. (Early book on Nietzsche, about 1900 [*The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche* (1908)]). "A poet & mystic who died mad & is chiefly remembered for his weird drawings à la Beardsley." ("Mystic" a Mencken insult.) ‡For Walter

Remember: The walk along the cliffs south from Land's End. The whole way one natural splendour after another, the most glorious kind of beauty. But nowhere & in no way the beauty of art; not because of repetition, for the variety was endless; not because of excess, because there could be no excess of such a world. Nor can I see art made out of it, not of its characteristics; not visual art. (Has there been? Will Gabriel? There is something in it tempting but irreducible.) Nor has Cornwall produced more than folk-work.

To-day, 5 o'clock, a grey-pearl, the whole world cut out of grey pearl & black, a level-floored sea, lightly incised, dead white round the Brisons when the foam lifts.

March 1932 sees the publication of Butts's second collection of stories, Several Occasions *(Wishart), and two pamphlets:* Traps for Unbelievers *(Harmsworth) and* Warning to Hikers *(Wishart).*[6]

[From draft of letter to Cocteau:]

Cela fait deux ans et plus depuis que je vous ai vu . . . Rappelez-vous qu'il y avait une traduction de moi, de ce livre [*Imaginary Letters*] pour lequel vous avez fait des dessins adorables, pour lequel vous avez dit que vous m'écrirez une preface? Est-ce que c'est fait? J'ai entendu que cette Américaine qui édite *l'Echéance* a annoncé leur publicité avec cette préface de vous. Si c'est vrai, je vous remercie de tout mon coeur.

Dans un livre récemment paru [*Several Occasions*] j'ai dédié un conte ["The House-Party"] à vous—une permission que je demande un peu trop tard.

Jean Desbordes, comment va-t-il? Et Jeannot [Bourgoint]? Mireille (sur laquelle j'ai peur de poser des questions)? Georges Auric? J'ai entendu par Jean Guérin la fin atroce des de Malleissyes.[7] Et surtout vous, Jean.

[6] For the extremely positive reception of these three works see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 294–302.

[7] Mireille Havet is at this very moment dying in Switzerland, see her biographical outline. Heavily addicted to drugs, both Jacques and Ketty de Malleissye committed suicide within a few months of each other, Jacques in 1930 and Ketty in 1931.

[It's been two years since I saw you… do you remember there was a translation of that book of mine for which you did the wonderful drawings & for which you said you'd write a preface? Have you finished it? I heard that that American editor of *Echeance* has announced it as forthcoming with your preface. If it's true, heartfelt thanks.

In a recently published book I dedicated a story to you to you – asking you for your permission to do so is a little overdue.

How's Jean Desbordes? And Jeannot? And Mireille (I'm scared to ask about her)? What about Georges Auric? Jean Guérin wrote to me about the awful end of the de Malleissyes. And, most of all, how are you, Jean?]

10 March 1932

Remember: Out on the cliffs by Nanquidno. The woman with the old house & the sunk garden & the boar. The bird-food box on a stick. Everywhere, the birds. And what I saw looking down & cannot describe. The puzzle of stone walls & dark green flowering hedges set to hold the narcissi-strips, still another brilliant green.

The Wire-less Man on my return.

Q: How does it work? (him)

A: Less than ever.

Him: I'm not surprised. Then on leaving: "it's funny, everyone's set in Sennen seems to have gone wrong, just as I'd finished with them."

14 March 1932

Remember Douglas [Goldring]'s second night here & the happiness between us three, a 'coming back' of something I have hardly known for years. Douglas as the Perfect Guest, the Faultless Friend in the house; all done by the pure grace that is in him. ‡ With this, Squire's review & Ellis Roberts, the sense of something fairly won: "Et l'espoir, malgré lui s'est glissé dans mon coeur. [And hope, despite everything, has crept into my heart.]"[8]

‡Compare with August following—Hélas!

[8] J. C. Squire, "The Modern Revival of the Short Story: Miss Mary Butts's Success," *The Daily Telegraph* (8 March 1932), 16, and R. Ellis Roberts, "Short Stories," *The New Statesman and Nation*, 3, 5 (12 March 1932), 338–40. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 295–6.

‡ Last night out by Genvor, the terrible light, blue, violet, dark bril-liant, distinct, the indigo-ruffled sea. ‡S. E. gale

But I must not forget my own sense of release, of possible triumph & the delights of first recognition. Nor Gabriel's pleasure in it, nor Douglas.'

Eliott O'Donnell & tree-potencies.[9] I believe he is 'on' to something true & important there. Some trees have personality—out of hell or fairy-land. (Azay-le-Rideau [Loire Chateau]). That is why I miss them, even here—& am not sure if I know yet, or can grasp—the daimons of this land.

22 March 1932

New names for the sea? To begin with—the secret. And I don't mean coral islands but this bit of the Atlantic. In its blue & green peacock flow, it has tales to tell & doesn't tell them.

Douglas Goldring says that Mrs Henderson was associated with Crowley at the Aquila Press. This explains that evening with her & Oswell Blakeston & the nice people at Swan Court, when she told those stories. ‡ ‡For ONE?

New Tales—Contes Cruelles.

I. Hugh Ross Williamson's hermit in the harpy tomb.
II. As above GH (Mrs Henderson) & the Aleister Crowley touch.
III. Ford's last dancing.

Five in all with "After the Funeral" & "With & Without Buttons"—half a book.

D. of FT [*Death of Felicity Taverner*]

Données: 'the great war between the young & the old.' It now comes to this point: arrival of old Mrs Taverner, Adrian (opening—slight spring

[9] Eliott O'Donnell (1872–1965), British supernatural writer and ghost hunter. Butts mentions him much earlier when asking Goldring to bring a copy of O'Donnell's *Anthology of English Ghost Stories* to her in Germany because "I want to get ideas from it. . . . The ghost-story is a form with which there remains a lot to do." Butts to Goldring, Rapallo, undated [November–December 1923], in Goldring, *The Nineteen-Twenties*, 213.

interlude of Boris' pranks) Mrs T like the old woman in [my story] "Green." Inventions for her & her son? Meet Boris & adopt him? Test of his virtue, which nearly succumbs? After all, he'd have a reaction-grievance on the other Taverners for getting the truth out of him. Is the invention their detaching game with him? It might be a resumé of several stories; the spoiling game & the death game—"Green," "Friendship's Garland," "The Dinner Party"(?), "The House Party." Also "The House." A device for this: "Marie, c'est si facile de faire les belles choses" ["It's so easy to create beautiful things," from Cocteau]. This, the other way round, is the key of the whole affair. If there is the right ardour, the right detachment.

Boris, of course, goes over to the Taverners at the start, what he cannot swallow is Kralin. (Note with what saving detachment the Taverners bear this.)

Does Mrs Taverner come over first to call? On her, cf. [D. H.] Lawrence's story of the Prince of Wales & the white ants [*Kangeroo*]. Quote?

Begin afresh with the old & young Taverners.

24 March 1932

Douglas Goldring first met Alec Waugh at Harold Monro's: took him for young Austrian manservant.[10] Waugh took part, said "this way." Later: "May I publish your books?" admiring [Goldring's] *The Fortune* [(1917, 2nd ed. 1931)] & Douglas discovered he was looming his youth. Alec Waugh developed—up to the point of *So Lovers Dream* [(1931)]—the apotheosis of the gentleman's gentleman. But the valet has no aspirations or thought—above those of a professional valet. Gordon Carruthers [protagonist in Waugh's *The Loom of Youth* (1917)]. "What about a couple of short stories with Heart? It might mean a thousand to you."

Alec Waugh as disciple of [British novelist Pamela] Frankau.

Remember: Yesterday. The loveliest day here, the very blue, the soft, the shining. Surf-layers on Cowloe. In the evening *Horae Aurae* or "ours is a 'appy 'ouse." [Griffin, "Come to Glengariff! Come!"]

To-day—How Gabriel cleaned the kitchen.

[10] Alexander (Alec) Raban Waugh (1898–1981), British writer and publisher, brother of Evelyn Waugh. Worked at their father's publishing house, Chapman & Hall, which published Butts's first book, *Speed the Plough and Other Stories* (1923).

Remember: Tonight, the indescribable storm at sunset—the washed-pastel-dusk colours of the cliff-face. "The wild grass runs up the wild hill." A pane or so lit in the black & white panelled hotel. Then the sea. The indigo & peacock turned to ash as the squall struck Cape Cornwall. The divided rain-curtains passing across the sunset, one thick rain-pillar in the middle. The spray-mountains that rose up between us & it. (The fine spray was coloured rose. The utter black of the Brisons & the Cape. Nothing could describe it, but Gabriel watched as if he were praying.)

Remember: Last night, the moon again, on its back like a boat beside its star, the emerald & citron sun-flight into the sea.

4 April 1932

Sancreed: remember: the mist flying. Tregonberis Hollow. How the cross stood, so high & so lightly-tiled that it seemed like a green-grey tree or a stone flower. Panels in the church. The holy well—which I did not like, with the steps down into its hole, & the shiny metal threads where the slugs came to drink. The not-too-good magic of its delicate, too-green maidenhair ferns. 'Philadelphia Corn' in the church. Wild garlic, the blacksmith at Drift Mills, in the bus, the light breaking on the Atlantic sea-floor.

Remember: Skies. Last night, El Greco; the indigo sunset, the dull, soft, dead-gold cord sinking. Storm angry-gold last night, more indigo water & wave crests bright mountain-pink.

15 May 1932

Since Douglas left.

In mid-May Butts's trustees buy her a small new bungalow in Sennen Cove a few hundred yards away from Sarah's Well, which "seemed to have been chucked on to the narrow shelf of a cliff high above the wide roaring Atlantic breakers."[11] *Butts changes its bland name of 1 Marine View to the more exotic Tebel Vos (House of Magic).*

[11] Frank Baker, *I Follow But Myself* (London: Peter Davies, 1968), 119. For a detailed description of the house, its contents, and the surrounding landscape, see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 287–9.

THE MOVE here, & the beautiful things that came from London. (The view from the window which would stop any quarrel.) The marvellous 'finds' unpacking, books & curious treasures & beautiful things. Betty Montgomery's letters again.[12]

At Lamorna, the stream that runs down over the rocks into the cove, & you can hear both water-voices. (Not a fall: a trickle under the stones: disappointing.)

17 May 1932

[Neighbours:] William Charles; Mrs Roberts indignant—"he was three sheets over the eight."

1 June 1932

Remember: First nights here with the candles lit. On Skewjack this afternoon & the way things grew.

Gabriel's story: Lady Colefax when Edith Sitwell had not quite arrived.[13] ES said she liked riding on bus-tops. Lady C recoiled. A few days later, ES met her on t[op] of a b[us]. LC said "Oh my dear Edith, will you come to breakfast, lunch, tea or dinner; Monday—TWTFSS . . ." ‡

‡True She also rang up Lawrence of Arabia [T. E. Lawrence], who she did not know: "Oh my dear Col L. I want you to come to a party of mine given specially for you. So interested in what you've done, Doughty's *Arabia Deserta* & all that."

9 June 1932

Remember: Walk on the cliffs on to the Cape Cornwall path from St Just.

The rough way home—the storm of sunlight & blue water. The way the Longships [huge outcrops] lie. The smell of sea-pinks, the high rocks where there is no path. How we lay in the porch & watched the Degas beach (Or the Manet). The cream beach, green & white striped 7 foot primrose tent. The child in blue, the girl in violet. The girl in rose, the girl in green, the woman—judged from size—lying in the flame-coloured

[12] The letters from Betty Montgomery have not survived.

[13] Lady Sybil Colefax (1874–1950). Wife of Sir Arthur Colefax. Society hostess, lived in Argyll house in Chelsea, London.

maillot. Gabriel's picture *China Rock*. Shadows innumerable criss-crosses on the same sand when the sun was low.

Gabriel's story: 2 old ladies in a tea-shop: "of course, my dear, I know it's the unexpected that happens; but the worst of it is, you never know what the unexpected is going to be." (Heard.)

Du Bos, *Byron and the Need of Fatality* [trans. Mayne (1932)]. A book I am not likely to forget, but will put down a few notes to remind me—as always—of infinitely more. Augusta—Marie Beerbohm? It is as though one had hit on a scent. How much more I know now & understand. Du Bos can say profundities without being tiresome. "While for Byron, as for all those for whom sensation is the central fact, sensations must be reviewed every minute, intensified, exacerbated, while with him the mere capacity for feeling is wholly subject to the rhythm of change—with Anabella the very life of the sensation itself resides just in the singleness which alone ennobles it, & therein the duration which not only deepens but consecrates it, because in the heart of the present can be heard, real & annunciative, the cadences of the past & future. Those who thus have the low murmur of their identity are perhaps the only beings on earth who are immune from divertissement . . ."

16 June 1932

Foxgloves, don't die in water, but fade in colour. A jar of them now tones with a vase of Gabriel's feather flowers under a shade, & a bead bag of mine. True absolutely to the period. (Nature hurrying up after Art. Seen with our own eyes. Are foxgloves a specially Victorian motif?)

17 June 1932

To St Just—5 miles just over an hour. Along the cliffs in the afternoon sun. It was like being a strong animal again.

I remembered there: "Through what wild centuries/ Roves back the rose" [de la Mare, "All that's Past"].

And the other day when I found the azaleas & the rhododendrons in the deserted wood, the orchid in the clearing.

Butts quotes several verses from T. S. Eliot's Ash-Wednesday (1930).

18 June 1932

Heard from Betty [Montgomery] of Pat Guthrie's death.[14]

19 June 1932

In the small wood at the back, in the place behind Sennen so desolate it is hardly there. Azalea, rhododendron, orchids.

"Through what wild centuries."

20 June 1932

A fine sequence today: up the hill after lunch, sat on the high stile above the P.O. [Post Office]. I read Mahaffy's *The Silver Age of the Greek World* [(1906)] waiting for the bus. The wind is strong, roughening the sea. We had tea in the porch together, lettuce & brown bread & "le bon thé parfumé d'Angleterre." Gabriel sang. Polished the fine furniture & did small things to beautify the place, with the wind rushing through the house for accompaniment. (I have often to learn to enjoy happiness again.) Then there was an early sonata, Beethoven & Desmond MacCarthy [*Portraits*].

The durée of it all is lovely, passing from action to action.

24 June 1932

Remember: The night of the 22nd on Skewjack Moor: the violet & silver bloom on the hay-field (feather grasses) the midsummer bloom on the moor, blue crystal mist in the hollows & at 11 o'clock the day-reflection still off the sea. And there was the 'visible Pan' of midsummer all over the place.

‡FOR A BOOK?

‡ Betty Montgomery suggests a book on Pat [Guthrie] & Duff [Twysden]. Often have I thought of it, but it won't shape. And there is something that hurts.

I must be careful about the things that hurt. They cloud my memory & nag me with remembered pains. And the triumphs are forgotten. This is serious.

[14] Patrick (Pat) Guthrie (1895–1932). In the 1920s Pat Guthrie had been the lover of his cousin Duff Twysden, accompanying her on the famous trip to the Pamplona fiesta of 1925, which formed the basis of Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. He seems to have committed suicide.

[From draft letter to Duff Twysden, now living in Texas:]

A friend has told me about Pat [Guthrie]. We know between us most of what there is to say, so I needn't try. Nor can I ever forget how you pulled me through the worst bit of Cecil's death. How are you, my dear? I'm married to Gabriel—d'you remember how we first set eyes on him one night in the [Café] Sélect, before too many things happened to us?

We live here utterly sober & industrious. That's that. What news of you?

26 June 1932

Remember: The sea tonight when the sun was like a rose—it hardly ever is, but tonight like a huge Cornflower sinking in a mist. The rose path & blue-jade water shadows. The rocket-smoke erect in air, a cone upside down violet hedges below at Chapel Idny.[15]

1 July 1932

Gabriel said I look "like a langouste with crumbs." I thought I was going brown.

2 July 1932

Second walk with Ruth Manning-Sanders.[16] Penrose Farm. Desmond MacCarthy is right. How many things one has delighted in on bad or in different days.

To-day: the wind-cradle the other side of St Buryan. His book. The walk. Gabriel's voice before dinner. The sea's voice, the open roar & song. ("A lapse of cuddles with cheese & nearly bats" [Stein, *Tender Buttons*]. "I prefer snails.") Long may they continue, those black, blithering & blasted animals, to salt the rainy ground of virtue.

‡ Gertrude Stein & her house. Visit of a young woman in love. Loss of her lover. The empty ciboria. The art-snobs. Behind the curtain. A tragic tale & "a lapse of cuddles in the cheese no bats."[17] ‡FOR A BOOK?

[15] See 10 September 1932.

[16] Ruth Manning-Sanders (1888–1988), British writer. Shortly after Butts's arrival in Sennen Cove the Manning-Sanders have their house "Esther's Field" built on a plot of land just above Butts's bungalow.

[17] The basis of Butts's story "From Altar to Chimney-Piece," (1938). See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 304–6.

4 July 1932

[Death of] Felicity Taverner 50 thousand words today, conservative estimate. A difficult, cussed time & incident stretch.

6 July 1932

Felicity. Done a great chapter more. The end is in sight. Io Paian.

7 July 1932

The sub-conscious is a queer thing, after dead hours over *Felicity*, I suddenly see the next bit, but only the next bit clear. But the writing of the whole book has been queer. A blind feeling the way, with the past, once written, as indistinct as the future. Not exactly bored with it, but as if I wrote it in a dream. I can't judge what the effect will be. It's as if I wrote it in a daze, part of a (?) I am not fully conscious of, like putting a puzzle together by touch, a jigsaw puzzle of an unknown picture. It may be that each novel I write I am getting nearer & closer to the story I want to tell. Something of this kind is true, & there is some sleep-walking about Felicity. Now at the stage when the Ghost Appeared.

Back to it.

11 July 1932

An adorable letter from Ross Williamson.

12 July 1932

[Notes on] Naomi Royde-Smith—partly a Ghost Book *Madame Julia's Tale, and Other Queer Stories* [(1932); Butts's favourite story is "The Pattern."][18]

13 July 1932

These last weeks have been, no, are being the happiest in my life. A balance of all ways, focused round the new house & the home & in the life

[18] Naomi Royde-Smith (1875–1964), British novelist and playwright. Friend of Butts's and admirer of her work, they meet and correspond during the 1930s. Royde-Smith pays posthumous tribute to Butts's literary contribution in "Mary Butts," *Time and Tide*, 18, 12 (30 March 1937), 378 and "'The Crystal Cabinet' by Mary Butts," *Time and Tide*, 18, 21 (5 June 1937), 756–7.

we are making. The last chapters of *Felicity*. Gabriel's paintings, Gabriel's book.[19] The exquisite details of the house, from the food to the objets d'art. The reviewing & perfecting of it. The weather & the flowers & this land. The books. The candle-light. The letters of our friends. Health & work & our marriage, 'the plant' the sea. The great angers & griefs & anxieties are being reduced by these, a little more than a dawn battle. They are sharp enough, but there are prayers also against them. I have to learn to be really happy again, to notice it, to go slow & notice it.

Invited the Hills [Postmaster & Postmistress] & talked happily of the Manning-Sanders & how all we strangers come to live here might do Sennen credit.

We have added to the house, useful things—kept as they were beautiful, until they become beautiful—some beautiful things: a crockery mug, dogs & birds in very coarse painted relief & a white frog inside: the paperweight, the Wyndham Lewis floor: Oswell [Blakeston]'s spanish leather pouch. The beginning.

Behind me I can hear the fire talking happily, & below me the sea. There is no other sound.

NEXT BOOK—STORIES

Written four (or two): "After the Funeral," "With & Without Buttons," "Change"(?), "The House" (good enough?).

To be written: †The Gertrude Stein Song ["From Altar to Chimney-Piece"] (Done, 4 December 1932); The Hermit and the Harpy-Tomb (almost done); †Ford's Last 'Dancing' (Done, 11 March 1934); †The abominable Stories; The Man who could have been a Painter; The Trees (Little Thornsdale & after); The Christmas Cards talk (good enough?)

Nine, ten or eleven—enough?

† Moeurs contemporains.

[19] Atkin is trying to get an illustrated book published. See Atkin to Goldring, 30 June 1932; Butts to Goldring, 105 Oakley St, undated [1931] and Sarah's Well, undated [early 1932], Goldring papers, University of Victoria.

17 July 1932

A Sunday: [Colin] Summerford came.[20] A boy I like. Gabriel rather bad, perfect at first—then, I will not be known as the wife of a "gifted & charming man; pity he drinks." I will not. Gabriel does not understand. He is not inside his own little group now, where being a 'bit blotto' is taken for granted. He has to come back to the world's eye, with a wife. And we both have careers to make. Would he be pleased for his friends to see me like that? And he does not remember what he is like. He is rude to me, & all his lovely charm & wit vanishes in repetitions & vague sentences which mean nothing & questions he can't formulate, & an awful pointlessness. Shame-making, above all, to me who have such pride in him. He embarrassed the boy, & only a feeling that one of us mustn't lose any more face kept me from abandoned crying.

If only he'd be shrewd enough & ambitious enough to see that it won't do. For one thing, when we have more money how are we to go to London & into the world, dine & meet people, if he cannot be sure of himself? But the real thing is that he is risking our marriage; for I cannot endure it. I can't do more than try & put on a brave face. I cannot 'pass' it, because it is outside my powers of endurance, my moral powers or force. Even now—stories will go back to London, stories so commonplace & vulgar, yet—no, & to me unendurable.

And the one thing that really matters is that Gabriel is injuring himself, the gay, pure, gifted, brilliant, loving, adorable Gabriel will be destroyed by this. That is what matters. Not me. Not our marriage. Himself. His beauty, his mana, his art.

And our marriage matters too. It depends on him

20 July 1932

Recovered quickly. All is well with us again.

[20] Colin Summerford (b. 1908), British literary critic, teacher, librarian at the Royal Mint. Close friend of the supernatural writer Arthur Machen. Summerford writes to Machen after this visit asking him if he has ever met Butts. Machen had met Rodker but not Butts. After Butts's death Summerford, who admires her writing, sends a copy of *The Crystal Cabinet* to Machen, who replies: "I am sure there is good in 'The Crystal Cabinet' for which I thank you very much. But what made the woman think that the verb may be omitted in an English sentence?" See Machen to Summerford, 20 July 1932, 23 December 1937, *Arthur Machen Selected Letters*, 131–2, 155.

Flowers. Lilac-rose, Yarrow & wild carrot, powder rose; arranged flat a flower-face [in cliff-facing garden].

21 July 1932

Finished *The Death of Felicity Taverner*. Never had such trouble with a book before. But it has been the utmost blessing of our marriage how we have worked together (Gabriel on his book, all but finished tonight) on these.[21] ‡ (Cf. how much there was to say about what was bad, while the 'utmost blessing' goes into one line?) But it is almost too much to tell. And I will tell it, perfectly, some time—my angel in the house, my Gabriel. Which will win? But nothing can take this away. He knows also.

‡Done

25 July 1932

Household Hint: Polish your glass as well as your brass—but its a magical discovery really.

26 July 1932

Last night Tchaikovsky, Sextet Op. 70 [on the radio]. A miracle. Get the record. And HMV 1054 (Neapolitan Song).

30 July 1932

Remember: Looking up the cliff from the Manning-Sanders' terrace, cliff-face in the brilliant sun, the silver unearthly light of shrub & fern & grass, wild & glowing. The nearest to "the light that never . . ." [Wordsworth, "Elegaic Stanzas on a Picture of Peel Castle in a storm"].

A jewel. A large patch of wild thyme on a rock, studded with bright green, & bright orange insects. And one butterfly, cock's feather burnished green with red spots.

The blue box—blackbird's egg-blue Gabriel bought me on the mahogany table glass.

30 July–2 August 1932

Bad days. Bad days that are over. If only next time, I could remember.

[21] Atkin has finished writing a thriller (unidentified).

6 August 1932

Death of Felicity Taverner finished.

16 August 1932

These last days have been good. Gaby at the First & Last [Sennen Pub] on Sunday. To-day, Mr Hills & the run in his car into Penzance. Finding the two frocks & the hat. The good lunch. The way the men smiled & the women scowled at me—"when you have that hat. All your friends call you a cat." The delicious unpacking of trifles. The body's self-respect at a clean, gay gown; an elegant, remarkable, confidence-inspiring hat.

Am I learning common joy again at last?

Conversation with Louis Wilkinson on Rebecca West.[22] I want to know why a woman who, brilliantly & honourably has demonstrated the feminist position, should, by her malice, avail herself of the worst & cruellest weapon of the worst of dependent women. On women like us it is obligatory to be a gentlewoman.

(I suppose that answer is as old as Rebecca's ways, that she's a woman absolutely without sex-appeal . . .) The considerations this arouses are dark, too dark. But I am enjoying such physical acts of living today & tonight. Dried Gabriel in his bath.

20 August 1932

Louis Wilkinson told me what Aldous Huxley said to him: "Americans, resolutely facing fiction."

28 August 1932

All this the Douglas Goldring & family interlude. Painful "dégringolade [distegration/breakdown]"—Betty [Montgomery]'s word. When old friends change like that, the sooner it is over the better. Long & short together, exceedingly so. What a month: what a discipline, disappointment, strain, fatigue—except for the boy [Goldring's son, Patrick]—a futility; for we've done little for Douglas, & he has for us.

Added to the house: the bell-shaped glass with the sand-picture inside.

[22] Louis Wilkinson (1881–1966), British novelist, biographer, and academic. Close friend of the Powys family, he visits Llewellyn Powys in Dorset on his departure to Sennen. Reference to Rebecca West is unclear.

Remember: looking up the hill from the Manning-Sanders's. The burning white light & blue shadows on the cliff grass & shrub & rock . . . that memory. At Salterns the ivy-strangled pine.

29 August 1932

Breakages go in series. To-night, the flower-shade by Douglas.

Ordered: P. G. Wodehouse, *The Jeeves Omnibus* (1931); AE, *Song and Its Fountain* (1932); Sullivan, *Bases of Modern Science* (1928); Macdonald, *The Crime Conductor* (1931).

30 August 1932

People I have known or loved & loved—dead in the last two years:

Jacques & Ketty de Malleissye	
Mireille Havet de Soyecourt	
Christopher [Kit] Wood	
Roy Martin	
Francis Rose	
Philip Heseltine	
(Jeanne Bourgoint—rather earlier)	
Cecil Rickword	(accident)
Marie Beerbohm	″
Cecil Maitland	″[23]

3 September 1932

The Deplorable Visit over (Douglas Goldring, Malin Goldring, Patrick Goldring). We did not quite lose our tempers, depression, irritation, sometimes visible, infinite disappointment, but no row: One up to us, I think—& the air greatly cleared by conversation alone with Malin, on the last night. Anxiety about Douglas profound & not lightened. But friendship not broken—under a cloud only.[24]

[23] Actually Francis Rose lived until 1979. Cecil Rickword (1899–1931), British banker and writer, had managed Wishart's press. After his death in a car accident, his cousin Edgell Rickword took over. Cecil Maitland died much earlier, in 1926.

[24] Butts is right. See Goldring's papers, University of Victoria, for the correspondence between Butts and Goldring detailing their acrimonious disagreement in 1932 over Patrick Goldring's upbringing. Despite this, they become close friends again.

Anyhow it is over, & this exquisite house shines, flowery & still & in its delicate order again. I am full of praise, that lovely state personally & impersonally directed, a flowering.

9 September 1932

Ruth Manning-Sanders told us: what Barton said when George [Manning-Sanders] pointed out to him that there was such a thing as neighbourly good-will. "What—d'you mean to burn down one of my houses?"[25]

What one man of vulgar ill-will can do by way of harm in a village.[26]

10 September 1932

An Interesting Day. Penzance & the new dentist. Returned less a tooth plus information about teeth & people. The instrument (name?) that killed pain in stopping & ruined the teeth. "We judge by the patient's screams." And the lesson implied. Coming back in the 'bus with the Bolshie [Burnett]—& the intention of last January confirmed—that here was a personality worth knowing & a possible friend.[27] ‡ His Barton-story: his wife said to the man: "but you know it's an old chapel, don't you?" Answer: "Yes, there's lots of Wesley's old places left about."

‡Chapel Idny

(Campaign [to save Chapel Idny] to be begun: 'Bolshie' fired that train.)

Noticed that Barton, if not 'a criminal type,' is the kind of man one can see without the least difficulty, in a mean, vicious or brutal criminal situation. A bad day for Sennen when he came here. Will it be a worse?

And when I got back, I found the kittens asleep. Later Gabriel said that he had never been more happy in his life before. *Laus Deo* [God be praised]—ours is a good marriage, ours is.

Ordered: Violet Hunt, *The Wife of Rossetti* (1927); Eliot, *Selected Essays* (1932); *The Great Victorians*, ed. Massingham (1932); Evelyn

[25] George Manning-Sanders, artist and writer, married to Ruth.

[26] George Barton is a local builder. For more information about him and Butts's involvement in trying (in vain) to prevent him from pulling down the ancient Chapel Idny and her attitude to what she saw as his desecration of the Sennen countryside, see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 394, 410.

[27] "Bolshie" Burnett, young Cornish builder involved in local Labour Party, whose family Butts befriends. Butts finds work for Burnett including the thatching of Angus Davidson's cottage No Place in 1934.

Waugh, *Black Mischief* (1932); Denis Johnston, *The Moon in the Yellow River* (1931).

‡ "What the Moon Saw." Thirteen moons, one year. De- ‡FOR A STORY
scription of each moon, its looks & character. Full-moon to full-moon or new moon to new moon? Its adventures through the year. Here, at Land's End? Yes, I think. And a glimpse of what it saw. Along with this, Anna Perenna & the Penteteris, cf. Aldous [Huxley] & the "numinous stone" ["Meditation on the Moon"]. Put in Gabriel crossing the stile in the gale & losing his tooth—what the moon saw.

What life must have been like in all the ages when there were no ugly or pretentious buildings or objects or trappings or clothing—with a drop back to late imperial Rome—hideously like what victorian artist painted of it. ‡ ‡FOR A WRITING quelconque

1st moon—full—last night. A honey-glowing segment rising over the green down-shoulder at evening, in the light before dusk. A few minutes later, clear of the turf, glaring through a spinning September mist, travelling fast in a breeze out to sea.

Look-up the names of each Moon—Harvest moon, Hunter's Moon etc.

Added to the House: old Cornish Cottage figure—2 girls each side of a jar & above it a clock. One white glass float. Mrs Roberts' gift. (Broken—the copper glaze dish on my bureau.) Several books. Brought out & displayed in the open bookcase the Borgia book & the three Dantes, vellum inlaid green & red & tooled in gold—Gabriel's superb edition.

19 September 1932

"What the Moon Saw." I. finished.[28] For II.—what about the idea for a writing moon-memories of this place before?

I wrote Moon I. with too great facility, what might become a parody of my style, & what is worse, of my thinking.

The moons needn't begin with the moon—some can start with things

[28] Butts's story "What the Moon Saw," ed. Nathalie Blondel and Camilla Bagg, has not yet been published.

done under the moon, moon-influenced or not. The trouble is to find 'em. What about times when the moon saw only lovely & appropriate things?

21 September 1932

Moon-talk:

"That orbéd maiden" [Shelley, "The Cloud"] & "the Dying Lady" [Shelley, "The Waning Moon"]. The Numinous Stone [from Huxley, "Meditation on the Moon"]. "Ride ten thousand days & nights" [Donne, "Song"]. "Queen & Huntress, chaste & fair" & all that [Ben Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels*]. "April's ivory moonlight" [Macaulay, "The Prophecy of Capys"]. "In a wheel I can draw the moon from heaven" etc. [Oscar Wilde, *A House of Pomegranates*]. "Among the stars that have a different birth." "Art thou pale for weariness?"—etc. [Shelley, "To the Moon"]; "the moon /Was like a little feather" etc. [Rossetti, "The Blessed Damozel"]. "With one star between the nether tip" [Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*].

Also "Moon, M. fascinating M" ["Moonstruck" (1909), song by] Gertie Millar.

"Waiting for the Moon to Rise" [Song].[29]

"The Moon Endureth" [Psalm 72.7].

"East of the Sun, West of the Moon" [William Morris/Scandinavian folktale].

Gabriel said, apropos Violet Hunt's book [*The Wife of Rossetti*]. "Like the bloom on grapes, mouldy grapes, got all over the room & obscuring persons & furniture" & lamented Lytton (Elizabeth Siddal).[30] "Sentences put in for the fact of making a sentence, applicable to anyone, anywhere." He's right. Cf. the Chelsea Arts Club to-day, where the tradition of the dirty bohemian still, in some old members, persists.

Get record; Song "Egmont" ("Happy & Unhappy") [Beethoven?] Concerto No 4.

[29] See 15 October 1929.

[30] Elizabeth Siddal (1829–62). British Pre-Raphaelite painter, poet, and model, married to Dante Gabriel Rossetti. She killed herself by taking an overdose of laudanum.

[From draft letter to M. R. James:]

You once did me the honour to write to me about your book, *The Five Jars* [(1922)], so beloved in my nursery & a book I know & equally in our libraries.

I've at last managed to write a ghost story myself which should come out soon—in *The Adelphi* or something like that—anyhow in a book—& given any quality it may have it owes to your influence, I want to be allowed to dedicate it to you.

It is called "With & Without Buttons" & when it is printed I want also to send it to you. And if I do not hear from you to forbid me, I shall understand that I may acknowledge my debt to you on the title page.[31]

Good B.B.C. phrase "Songs from the Shows" a certain 1910 comic genre—"still life songs."

Letter from Duff [Twysden].[32] There is a parallel in both our lives, & what is between us is unforgettable. (Answered, saying this.)

29 September 1932

Bad interval—sick & a little sorry. Not able to work & anxious to—'déprimée [depressed].' And yet never has life displayed itself so deep-rooted, so soundly running. It throws one's faults into relief.

1 October 1932

Adorable day. The Way. Penzance & the October sun. A new moon soon. In the salon tonight: the "infinitely gentle" [Eliot, "Preludes IV,"] infinitely gay, infinitely passionate. The last of the things I have asked for.

A bad turn. Anxiety about [financial] affairs & drought in the spirit. Prayers a dim formula, the Way running off over a far hill, ideas diminished, body exhausted, energy only to be directed to practical ends.

[31] There is no mention of M. R. James's response. "With and Without Buttons" (1938) was published without a dedication.

[32] See 24 June 1932. Unfortunately the letter has not survived.

6 October 1932

This morning the wind, no rose, kitten's messes, a bleeding scratch, The Stove, tradesmen, undone hair, bills etc dustbin were somehow patterned & controlled. ‡

‡Could we make it always happen! But there is a pressure from outside that sometimes is too strong.

11 October 1932

Points for second [wedding] anniversary (3rd for final judgement)

Equal weight pulling, 50-50 on the partnership? Is it a case for waiting for [Gabriel's] Aunt Anne to die & then? Or painting v. writing. Question of my respect. (Bad luck of Douglas's visit. Natural & yes, but not hard enough). Opportunities to be looked for. Up to now, all mine. If after 3rd year—more or less n.b.g.[no bloody good] my respect etc. Portrait of me. That our failures or—are bound up together. Power over my soul.

19 October 1932

Notes on the Historical Novel, *Josephus* by Feuchtwanger.[33]

21 October 1932

The House is now almost complete—picture rails with passage & pictures, & the high shelf, a decoration for the kitchen, lavender crockery & red candle-sticks. Blue Wedgewood & the pine-apple decanter, which is a stately piece. When Gaby put up the yellow match-box against the crocks & the black pottery cat, it looked well. Now a shelf for spice-boxes. All this made a little ground-bass of pleasure, a sturdy tune that went on playing.

Our Dowagers: Pat Guthrie's mother—gone to Paris to weep on his grave![34]

I wrote to-day to Betty Montgomery about this. I hope she keeps the letter & it is found & remembered.

[33] Butts reviews this in "Josephus," *The Bookman*, 83, 496 (January 1933), 405.

[34] After the death of Pat Guthrie's father in 1911, the family home (Torosay Castle, on the Scottish island of Mull) passed to Pat's mother, Olive, who lived there until 1945. In fact Pat's younger brother, David, was disinherited by his mother in favour of his nephew and two sisters.

Dear ghost of Pat—are you up on Mull watching for the Great Northern Diver? Or are you hanging about your mother, telling her to pay, something at least, towards your debts? Go off to Paradise, you old idiot, & wait for Duff there. Your mother didn't want you to have Torosay. Well, she's got her wish. You won't have it, but your nice, prudent, sensible second brother. You were impossible often, but forgivable. But I wish she wouldn't play at a broken heart. I know that stunt.

23 October 1932

"Use of the Supernatural." Add if possible, some more reasoned theme for its developments from the past; & where the pages are missing, fill in with other writers I have met lately.[35]

25 October 1932

All day reading Ruth Manning-Sanders's *She was Sophia* [(1932)]. It's 'genial' work, & a book that I got inside of, that folds itself round one. Magical & equally realistic knowledge of children, & of thwarted old women. This last strange, who is young still & her life rich & complete. Cf. *The Crochet Woman* [(1930) also by Manning-Sanders]. And all her work is poet's work, turned on persons & objects in observation. A very lovely & subtle gift—& with an earthy quality about it, profoundly female & maternal & all there. Satisfactory; like good bread & pure fruit, with the over-tang of life, as well as the straight taste. Utterly different from the febrile, over-cerebral, heartless, stiff, very well done—that we're deluged in. Matter of fact poetry, & if she develops, she will endure.

At Sennen: Gabriel & I are, both of us, always hearing, through the surf, a music-noise. Only through the surf, & nearly always—but cheap music, like a band, jazz & waltzes or marches. But when it is quite impossible that there should be any, & nearly always. I think it has been the same with me before near the sea. But why?

Death of Felicity Taverner, *Butts's third novel, is published in November 1932 by Wishart. Its critical reception is extremely positive.*[36]

[35] Basis of "Ghosties and Ghoulies" (1933).

[36] See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 308–13. Ethel Colburn Mayne proposes *Death of Felicity Taverner* (with the enthusiastic support of Violet Hunt) for the prestigious

[2 November 1932]

List for *Felicity*
1. Roderick [Meiklejohn]
2. The Stevensons [unidentified]
3 John Stegerman [unidentified]
4. E. M. Forster (Weybridge)?
5. Tancred [Borenius]
[6.] Peter & Paul. [Peter Morris & (Paul) Odo Cross]
7. Ethel [Colburn Mayne]
8. Violet [Hunt]
9. Betty [Montgomery]
10. Filson Young
11. ~~Ross~~
12. Val [Goldsmith]. [Napier] Alington. Evan [Morgan]. Douglas?

Private List: Ruth [Manning-Sanders]. 2 self, ~~Walter~~ [Shaw], ~~Ethel~~, Ross, Swan, Walter [sic]: Also [Agathe] Paléologue (order 2 more).[37]

5 November 1932

'Mediterranean' day: crystal cold morning, warm moon night—cloud veils & fireworks. Out in the dark, in all loveliness—making me remember Salterns & when I was a child. Gabriel ill, but not a bad day—this interior of ours means hard work. I shall go exploring tomorrow, with luck on the hills.

Femina/Vie Heureuse prize. The prize is won by Rosamund Lehmann's *Invitation to the Waltz* (1932), and while Butts is understandably disappointed, she holds no grudges, describing the British writer Rosamund Lehmann (1903–90) as "delightful" when she meets her in Cornwall on 22 April 1935. Butts would have been pleased to hear that at a party in London the painter "Wogan Phillips, an acquaintance of mine, and the husband of Rosamund Lehmann, was full of your work, and of how much they both admire you." Tony Butts to *Mary Butts,* undated [autumn 1932], Butts papers.

[37] Edwin Morgan Forster (1879–1970), British novelist. Tancred Borenius (1885–1948), art historian. Alexander Bell Filson Young (1876–1938), British writer, journalist, and advisor to the BBC. Has a house near Sennen. As editor of *The Outlook* he had been Butts's first-ever publisher when she had a poem and an essay appear in that publication in 1906. See Introduction note 8.

7 November 1932

An Idea: It is now the fashion to sneer at Lytton Strachey cf. MacCarthy on Booms. Why? Is it his imitators? No. Worse reasons—& so much—not all—the praise has been said.[38] Another Idea: (One) Future of the Cinema—reconstructions of the historic past, true re-construction with all that it implies.

9 November 1932

‡Remember: Moon waxing. A simple light on the sands at low tides, ‡MOON a torch or a crescent, steady in the quiet air. A dark figure beside it & its reflection in the wet sand.

Every night of this moon has been good—like a friend returning, each visit a little longer, & as our torch has given out, a light to our feet at exactly the right time. The beauty of the way under the light veils she is wearing is untranslatable in any image.

11 November 1932

Armistice Remember: [Sennen resident] Mr Minnifee, that old, slender body & the gold sword-sash. Everything that happened this morning in Sennen Church. Too tired to write—tho' now I recover quicker—too quick on emotion-suite. Duff & Jean Cocteau's letter & photographs. Then Heather & the Lamorna party. Noel Coward from her & his songs. Then the 'First & Last' [pub]. Then here, & how badly we kept our promises to each other. (How good it was to hold close to him in spite of it all.) Then this morning, the cold wind struggling up the hill—outside the Church, inside it, in before the Cross. Then Ruth Manning-Sanders on the path home, tea, good sense & affection. I was profoundly grateful to them both.

STORIES: to be written now

I. Ford's Last Party (DONE)
II. Altar-Lights [From Altar to Chimney-Piece] (DONE)
III. Mr Minnifee's Uniform
IV. The Vase
V. Madmen at Tea

[38] First mention of her essay "Bloomsbury" (1998), although completed in 1936.

VI. What the Moon Saw (finish, 2 done)
VII. Yardley—Biddulph
VIII. The Hermit & the Harpy Tomb
IX. The Vile Stories (Café Royal)
X. The Man who could have been a Painter
XI. The House-moving
XII. The Trees (Little Thornsdale [Sussex]—Newcastle)
XIII. Earth-Thrones (Delphi).[39]

29 November 1932

Remember: Sequence. Walk to the Cove [the Misses] Old Graces; inside the little house with the round pointed thatch. The dresses, the grime, the smell, the kisses, the tears. Chapel Idny, the garden with marigold. The Beach—small cuttle fishbones. A sea-scape now on my desk. Wave mountains on the horizon, travelling in at us—old George's son papers out a line for bass. Sea-scape off the beach. Back to the house in loveliness. Light on Val-an-Dreath—flame light, & rose fire foam above the jade on Cowloe. All from the sun, low in heavens; cloud-fringe almost to the horizon & then a clear gold rainy 'wave-coating.' Gabriel at the porch. Philips from Sancreed with his pure 'race', beautiful face. Brought him to tea for purely magical purposes.

3 December 1932

Moon of the third or 4th night, a moon-sword. Remember the beach next day; remember George cutting my hair. Remember the Sonata of William Young—"calling the wild cherry tree—" [Edward Thomas, "Lob"] (which is my device from now on). The ten thousand lovelinesses that accompany my own [critical] 'triumph' over *Felicity*.[40] Gabriel's beauty.

Tony [Butts]—theory for—& more than theory—same final truth I think: That the key to him & to all that he does is subjectivism run mad. He has no criteria but those of his own inward life, which means, in prac-

[39] Only I., II., VI., and VIII. were completed with these titles. Story X. was renamed "The Guest," completed the following year, and first published in *Life and Letters To-day*, 13, 1 (September 1935), 101–15. For a description of this story, see Blondel, 328.

[40] Butts is particularly delighted with the review by Wynyard Browne, "A Great Novel: *Death of Felicity Taverner,*" *The Bookman*, 83, 495 (Christmas 1932), 306.

tice, in his case, the procession of the emotions (cf. MacCarthy on Fay's "*Panorama de la Littérature Contemporaine*.") It's something like "le Mysticism du Verbe" again—in this case the first 'verbe' that comes into his head.

8 December 1932

This is a knife-moon, this December. I was right. It has slashed us, now three days with the east wind. It rides above it, cold & distant, & rarely quite clear of a blur of high brown clouds.

Quilt 121 pieces to Dec 1st; 165 to 10.12.32.[41]

11 December 1932

I think that the Grail might be seen here this winter. It is time, anyhow. Philips from Sancreed—Remember.

15 December 1932

Fell sick—the nervous 'épuisement' [exhaustion] I now have to be careful about. Tiresome to have to watch one's body, but it can be made interesting. I will make it interesting—in so far as I have to do it at all.

On the beach two days ago Gabriel elected to the life-boat committee. The new sea-scape, coral & deep blue. Fan-mail a joy—& to Gabriel, bless him. Bed with the painted shelves, in themselves a loveliness, exquisite. Those & the "Veni Creator" [Catholic prayer]. Was the desire of last week in the last book, was it, is it found? In what I wrote to Betty Montgomery. Gabriel & the roots struck? We are, at least, growing this place with loveliness & there is always, in each day, a passage—"a quickness that my God has kissed" [Henry Vaughan, "Quickness"]. Dear Lord & Father of Mankind.

How the theory of microcosm & macrocosm explains things—at least to my type of mind. At least, I can use it to form an imaginative whole, which, I suppose, is what great philosophers do with their infinite gift for abstract speculation.

[41] In addition to her prolific literary output, Butts finds time to garden, make quilts, and hook rugs. See 1 February 1933, 7 June 1935.

Read all day lying here MacCarthy's *Portraits*. A friendly book, & I find its four-square sense a comfort. A supplement to Eliot—a far profounder mind, but without the four-square massiveness, the "integrity of a manly judgement."

Small treasure—the new, fluted square pillar glass candlesticks.

Post & Patrick Paddypaws [Butts's cat].

19 December 1932

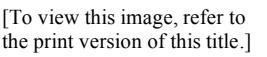
Sancreed again with Oswell [Blakeston]. (Why never with Gabriel?) Curious little moment of anger at Buryas Bridge. Why this new scientific fairy-tale to help men to dodge truth? ‡ The crystal ring.

‡Now we know 6.12.35

25 December 1932

Added to the House (came home). Miniature of me: the crystal seal, the red marble carving, the compass, the amber-sweat, the miniature in the ring.

1933



3 January 1933

Filson Young called: was rather proud of Camilla. She is also a darling when I want to work.

7 January 1933

Ruth Manning-Sanders came to dinner. Talk on religion. The idea returned to me which I had after the walk to Sancreed, after the talk—quarrel—at Oswell [Blakeston]'s cheap, hysterical atheism—at Buryas Bridge.

Something like this—Oswell Blakeston & others, of various sorts, talk, mostly windily, about 'Eastern Initiations.' Always Eastern, without knowing much about them, or about initiations in their savage, or social, or scientific aspects. While no one I have ever heard of (& who are profoundly & practically interested in them in the fact of Initiation) seems ever to consider, or even to know about, the rites of the classic West. People who chat airily about esoteric Buddhism & its advantages, never consider what Mithras or Orphis let alone Delphi or Eleusis or the Grail or the Faith of our Fathers did—can still do for men.

I hope—I am even beginning to believe that a research of infinite importance will be made into these: that when the spiritual genius who the world needs, who must happen, happens, these will be his lines. And I believe the Grail is stirring at Sancreed: I know my own life to be a series of initiations, under the cool, holy, adorable, sophron formulae of Western man.

8 January 1933

With this sense of dawning information—among other things has come an extraordinary peace. As though (among other things) curative power would not fail me.

9 January 1933

Preface to Ashe?[1] What can I say? That it's a fairy-tale? That life got like that at the end of the War (has perhaps been like that ever since only we're more or less used to it.) A kind of fairy-tale of our sorrows, with the good ending fairy tales must have? ‡

‡Flop—perhaps I deserved it. But not Gabriel's indifference & contempt.

[1] *Ashe of Rings* is published for the first time in Britain by Wishart in September 1933.

Anything about style? The truth is that I was tight on Joyce at the time, as we all were; & that now having found how to reproduce half-conscious thinking, most of the fun has gone out of it. Yet it can't be taken out. Say that I could do it—him—just as deeply & more conventionally now.

12 January 1933

Sancreed: we did not go to-day. My head full of questions, & the awe remains & the sense of a very present mystery.

Blessed place, rain on our Waste Land.

13 January 1933

Went to 'Chapel' Carn Brea. I can no more describe it than what it is to look into the face of a crystal. I saw the Atlantic & the coast of England & a map of very pure green fields. Then behind us & away for ever, rising higher than our hill, a brown moor, sewn with stars. Houseless, pathless: & the air was purer than imagination has words.

15 January 1933

Last proofs of "Alexander" [*The Macedonian*.] P. Weston-Edwards' exquisite work.[2]

17 January 1933

Yesterday to Chapel Uny with the Manning-Sanders: not the ideal exploration, but how good, with Ruth for company & David [Ruth's son] & his tall friend with the red curls. (The lovely innocence of very young men). Surely heaven rejoices in them, & are girls comparable? Yes, sometimes.

Dieu, qui m'a créée artiste—give me the exercise of my genius again. "Purify our hearts, O Lord, purifiez nos coeurs." Ezra [Pound]'s prayer [in "Night Litany"].

18 January 1933

I suppose most people—people of our kind—in some way or another bear a form of the Little Mermaid's penance. I know what mine is: to hear

[2] Weston-Edwards, the editor at Heinemann, which publishes *The Macedonian* in March 1933.

the cold little voice say each time "that which passeth all understanding" [Philippians 4.7] comes into my life: "it may be a property of your subconscious you have tapped. It may, after all, be nothing external to you. You are very likely deceiving yourself, you & every man who has sought help of God." I don't like that voice. I believe what I hear is external to myself & ultimately from God. I'm learning to take that voice as something to be endured & scrutinised: to make an art of faith & of fortitude. The little Mermaid did it for love's sake. That will hardly cover me. It is, I think, what many of our age have to bear, must be bearing, alone, now.‡

‡This, in excelsis, till it came to its end, & I back to my Faith, its discipline & practice. Not perfected yet—on the way. 2 December 1935

20 January 1933

J. Langdon Davies, *History of Woman* [(1927)]

FOR A NOVEL (Scylla & Co in a new set?)

About this—on the two sufferings of our age. The aristocrat who knows only the aristoi are worth having, & yet seeing the people it was his business to help coming to destroy him. Make that into a story. It gets in my pet 'données,' especially magic. Might a Tommy Earp do for protagonist?[3]

22 January 1933

Perhaps one has to be as unhappy as this from time to time—to learn all over again that one is absolutely alone. Only I'm afraid of believing in the evil things too much. And I need Gabriel more than he can understand. (I'm tired out with it all.)

23 January 1933

This last moon—again most glorious. Night after night of splendour—Everything an amiable moon should be.

The only thing there is to do is to get to work & work & work & work. Thank God there is enough of that. I must not think about ruined things. If I have no-one to trust—I have no-one.

[3] This novel was never written.

24 January 1933

‡ Dream: Part of "What the Moon Saw"? ‡Story?

25 January 1933

We talk of the "dreaming" summer earth, but why not the "dreaming winter"—on a fine day of pure cold sun, with its air of illusion?

26 January 1933

Wherever you go on this beach there is something interesting out of the sea. I should keep a note of the things that come in sequences, like the line of rosy baby cuttlefish bones—there must have been a hatching, which gradually got larger & fewer. Two months later, there are still a few, odd sizes, about.

To-day, a new inlay of shell, the oyster & his pot & jars mostly, no cowries. An onion-boat seems to have thrown out cargo (?) (very young onions, sprouting). Hardly a sponge, when a month ago, the beach was red & rose & orange with them. Skull of one large bird, too battered to bring home.

STORY "Ford's Last 'Dancing" finished.
Letter from Ellis-Roberts.*[4] That is going to be something.

George Manning-Sanders on Cornwall & what it does to weak & imaginative people, quickening their inner perceptions, which if they have no knowledge to ballast it, destroys them. One knows this story.

Waste Land of all the Waste Lands. Yet there is Tao or something like the Grail & Gabriel's goodness sustaining us.‡

‡You see it sometimes come back for a little—never for long. 17 December 1935.

[From draft of letter to Dorothy Sayers:]

For several years I have followed Lord Peter [Wimsey] until I know pages of his sayings & doings by heart. And having been ill lately, I started all over again, to find him & Bunter as satisfactory & delightful as ever. The pair of them have convinced me besides seeing me—& how often—

[4] Richard Ellis Roberts to Butts, 24 January 1933. Quoted in Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 330.

through more than physical woes. So I would like to thank you. And hope & pray that there's another coming; & another & another; for years & years ahead. Always about the same pair.

With grateful thanks, etc.

I write books too—one, *Death of Felicity Taverner*, came out lately.[5]

31 January 1933

Remember: The bass-catch. The mirror-wet sands, all Sennen at the net, the splendid fish drowning in air. Their faces at the sea-harvest, good money coming in, the sea's gift, hard-work at the tide line with the sea rising to lift the net & let out the fish (70 lost out of about 2,000). Every man in Sennen, splashing at the light wave edge, carting the fish back in creels & boxes & sacks. Red faces & bright eyes ([Sennen residents] Cyril Trewin looking human)—seaboots & Goldsmith helping.[6] Then we went up to that noble studio he's got, the place I always felt romantic about—a stone shell like a tithe-barn. Talk of lovely things: "the Heppelwhite to go here, the Sheraton there." The venetian mirror tilted over the ancient chimney-piece. I felt I was his friend, & I shall go down & polish that furniture for him. ‡

‡I did—& what a sequel. 17 December 1935.

1 February 1933

Quilt-day. And the bulbs are coming up. Even this late cold hasn't snubbed them.

3 February 1933

Trevelyan's *England under Queen Anne* [(1932 volume)] reading it continually, making picture after picture of the times, & finding out at last what is meant by "the War of the Spanish Succession." ‡

‡Forgotten it again. 17 December 1933.

Begin new story? Which?

The Hermit & the Harpy Tomb—the idea is that he went there to be tempted? Yes, I think so. ‡

‡Half-done: not satisfied.

[5] Dorothy Leigh Sayers (1893–1957), British writer of detective fiction, playwright, and translator. Although Butts records that this letter was sent, no reply from Sayers has been traced. Butts's disappointment is temporary.

[6] Goldsmith, wealthy accountant who has retired to Sennen Cove.

6 February 1933

Remember: Penzance. (Smith & Book Library) but how pleasant it was to be among books again, to bring new books home.

9 February 1933

Dorothy Sayers' new book arrived, *Murder Must Advertise* [(1933)]. But where is Lord Peter?

11 February 1933

Dorothy Sayers, even with Lord Peter, about her worst book, a caricature of the others. What possessed her to write such a spineless fantasy. And the end was morally cruel. Sherlock Holmes knew better—the murder on account of blackmail does not come under normal categories.[7]

Philip Macdonald's book *Death on My Left* [(1933)] far more ethical—to me, anyhow, & I am coming to have more respect for 'Loranorder.'

This night's moon stood out of the sky like a stereoscopic photograph. One saw it in the round, was sensible of its solidity.

20 February 1933

Some books are an 'adventure,' as pictures are, especially Corot. A week ago there came, for our opinion & Gabriel's cover, the proof copy of what we call "Caroline." It is beyond belief exquisite & adorable, shakes tears out of one & lets one inside a miraculous & credible soul. I don't know which is the greater, the miracle or its credibility. Oddly, for me, I feel I must know her.[8]

24 February 1933

Remember: 3 nights ago, before the great wind came on again from the north, walking up from the Manning-Sanders's at dusk, the awful look of the sea. Not where it broke, but the plain of it, a terrible green-black. The

[7] As in the story "Charles Augustus Milverton" in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1905).

[8] This may well be Lois Dunne, *You and Caroline and I* (Wishart, 1933), which is the diary of a woman reflecting on bereavement.

sky, torn gold & purple was ominous enough—but that sea-floor. And its voice. All the way up the hill, I was violently afraid. (Thinking not of what there was there to fear as I struggled with the rising wind, but of Hemingway's book on Bulls [*Death in the Afternoon* (1932)]. But that night a Pan was visible that I shall not forget.

What is this thing in the mind that makes it, when it is suddenly filled with something, 'go on' about something else? I have often noticed it. The terror about in nature that evening translated itself into fear of bulls. Now nature—that storm coming was to be feared, a patent danger. Bulls were not. Yet I walked home full of the terror evoked by Hemingway's book. It often happens.

25 February 1933

Ashe revision done. Not too satisfactory.

I feel all life a suspense till *Alexander* [*The Macedonian*] is published. Then, I am certain, my future will be clearer.

27 February 1933

A Credo. "He saw the intellect & the logical reason of man no longer as a sedate & necessary thing, but rather a narrow silver bridge passing over an immense depth, around the highly-guarded entrance of which thronged clouds of angry & malign presences. Often mistaking the causes & often misjudging the effects of all mortal sequences, this capacity of knowing cause & effect presented itself to him nevertheless as the last stability of man. Always approaching truth, it could never, he knew, <u>be</u> truth, for nothing can be truth until it has become one with its object, & such union it was not given to the intellect to achieve without losing its own nature. But in its divine & abstract reflection of the world, its passionless mirror of the holy law that governed the world, not in experiments or ecstacies or guesses, the supreme perfection of mortality moved. He saluted it as its child & servant, & dedicated himself again to it . . . praying it to turn the light of its awful integrity upon him, & to preserve him from self-deception & greediness & infidelity & fear."

Shadows of Ecstacy [(1931)] by Charles Williams.*

A book, not a complete book, but all there is in answer to D. H. Lawrence. Credo.

3 March 1933

Bad times. Shall I ever learn my lesson about Gabriel? My need is too great. I am afraid that I never shall. Yet I must. And not be unjust in the learning of it. It is like a stone wall at present on which I am breaking myself. That must stop. It is as tho' I could not learn because he could give me what I need if he would. Or so I am persuaded.

5 March 1933

For the prayers: "Beloved Pan, & all ye other gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul; & may the outward & the inward man be at one. May I reckon the wise to be the wealthy, & may I have such a quantity of gold as a temperate man & he only can bear & carry" [Plato, *Phaedrus*].[9]

Yesterday: good sequence, but for the one hurting thing. Morning—gardening in spring sun, bulbs up. Afternoon—Goldsmith gave me a snuff-bottle. Which shall it be? The agate with the fish in relief & the coral stopper? The crystal with the peach tree, jade stopper? The sapphire glass with swastikas, coral stopper? They are all in a drawer & I can sit on the floor & look at them & choose. Oh very pleasant! Evening—after a day of pure sun, a sun-set past belief. Modelling—no—a sculpture of clouds on the Atlantic. These buildings crossed by a veil of hurrying shower cloud. In its lightness & quickness it tossed a veil across them, pearl-grey against their stupendous colour & darkness. It vanished into them; & for an hour, they stood on the horizon in the shapes of the stones of this country. Menhir & dolmen, rocking stone & standing stone. All the names. Night Last post brought *Alexander* [*The Macedonian*] & Ruth Manning-Sanders to supper. Good talk, warm & a feeling of joy. And so to bed. Not too ungrateful, heaven help me.

6 March 1933

A most perfect moment: dedicating, making into a present—with a gay little note inside—sealing in green wax, back arms, part Dionysos' head on the crystal, *The Macedonian* for Betty [Montgomery].

[9] Butts copies out prayers at the back of her journals from this time on.

7–8 March 1933

Added to the house: Goldsmith's gifts. 2 Victorian glass scent bottles, moulded glass, with stoppers, thick, coarse, like baroque flames. 2 modern fine cut-glass powder bowls (one on a glass tray, with lid).

Four chinese dishes. Fairly modern, I think but very pleasing.

Last & Best: Two snuff-bottles.

All my life I have wanted toys like these.

From MC-H [mother], Butts things. Miniature of me when a baby in blue enamel & paste octagonal frame. Red marble (which one?) relief in case. Crystal seal with gold setting (which gold?). Gold thumb ring, long oval with miniature of girl. A piece of amber, & a brass chinese compass etc.

8 March 1933

This month's moon. A particularly white crystal. No more at present than the night's chief jewel; & we have not yet seen much of it.

One thing I must be prepared for—the failure of *Alexander* [*The Macedonian*]. Instead of joyful, augmenting success, coldness, bewilderment, boredom & disbelief. It will be interesting to see how far my 'hunch' that this marks the turning point is right.

9 March 1933

On the 13th, Monday, *The Macedonian* comes out. What its fate will be I do not know now. I may have been all mistaken, & it pass as incomprehensible or childish. Or I may have been right, & it will give me my place in English letters for good. Or not yet—far later.

Wisest of letters from Ross Williamson, & an adorable one from Betty [Montgomery].

11 March 1933

Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa. Je m'accuse—of the sin of Ingratitude. Spring day (poppy day too). Walk with Gabriel—& with a bad start or so—we weren't unkind to each other. Luck on the walk—Penrose [Farm] & a hedgeside of wild daffodils. After lunch, gardening in the sun with him; working together with the person one loves which is so good. Evening (Remember) gorse-burning near Nanjulian, a wall of rose fire,

seen across the bay, through blue air, above blue sea. This just as the full moon rose &, like the sun, put out the day. Wave-crest on Cowloe tipped with moon-fire. A glory. And, with Ruth to dinner, I was discontented. Because—Gabriel when invited to pull my curls, said "Ginger," adding a cliched vulgarity; while I remembered a sentence of Ethel Colburn Mayne's on men who use just that expression . . .

When he had gone out, I was ashamed of myself, I worked, repeating the Psalm [19] "the heavens declare" & "laudeate, anima mea." But there is just one thing that people forget—e.g. that, my ear for music, in comparison with Gabriel's is as the beasts that perish [Psalm 49]. Musical sound he can hear as I never could. Only, where words are concerned, people like me can suffer just as truly. Can be, & frequently are—there are so many words about—driven to exasperation by mis-use of language. By cliche or coarseness: by vague, slipshod or inaccurate conveyance of meaning: or by mere infelicity of phrasing or even vowel-sounds. Of course one learns to be reasonable. And Gabriel has so delightful a voice, so finely pitched—"elegant" & "well-bred" are also the words—that it hurts when—(because it was the fashion once) he'll let any echo of anything, any suggestion appropriate or not that enters his head pass his lips. For his voice is adorable—it has behind it, as Sandy [Cecil]'s had, "the grave music of good scots."

Yet if I criticise him, because I'm in love with his perfection, he is angry; forgetting he has had more praise—has more praise—from me in a day than I have heard from him since first we were friends!

Why is it so easy too, to say the disagreeable things to people? How many men have I known who have said: "I think all the pleasantest things imaginable, so it isn't necessary to say them"? While that never prevents them saying every harsh thing that comes into their minds. Even my Gabriel says it—that Every Husband's cliche! Why not be equally reticent about the bad as well as the good? Better still, why not say the praising, admirable things that it puts heart into people to hear, & keep quiet about the other side? Best perhaps of all, why not say the good things out loud & regularly, keeping the criticism for moments of rage, or for elucidation, or for salt in the dish? As I try to do.

If people only knew what can be done by Praise. Praise, the wine in the cup, the "balm of hurt minds" [Shakespeare, *Macbeth*], the blessed food to the starved spirit. The Comforter—(& so part of the Holy Ghost). The Greeks, who knew most things, made a daimon of him; or, at least, an attribute, perhaps accurately, an aspect of Apollo. Paian. Παιαν—

the god himself. To express this, man invented a poetry, a making, the Paeon. But Apollo himself was the Praiser, Apollo Musagles, the Muses' Leader.

As a generation, we are starved for praise—for the giving or the receiving of it. Gabriel laughs at me & my fan-mail, but if he only knew what praise does for me—I've had so little. While praise, from the person I love, spoken praise, there are no words for the life it puts into me, Sandy [Cecil]'s first words of praise—Gabriel's—oh, so rare ones. Even old Goldsmith's half unwilling tribute the other day. It has a magical power over me, & I can't help it. That's the sort of artist I am.

While from those two, Cecil & my Gabriel, if I were dying & heard from them a word of praise, well—"from death to life thou mightest yet recover."[10]

Is it—is it the idea? Can I now write the life of Cleopatra I have so often told myself? Yes—if this is the key—(were my family ruined to show me this?)—that she could no longer stand the degradation of the Lagidae? If that is the key to it all, in Auletes, in Arsinoë, in her young brother, if I'm right, I can do it.

Ruth Manning-Sanders accoucheuse [midwife] to this.

Will it do? I feel as though all the pieces of a puzzle were falling into place. It explains Caesar, her ridding herself of her kin, her cultivation of herself.

12 March 1933

Remember: This Sunday morning. Pearl-blue day, sun in his first strength—which is surely greater in Cornwall than anywhere else in Britain. (No longer can one say 'England' here.) Morning in the garden making/helping things to grow, watching things grow. Hungry for lunch & thirsty; bowels right. Visit to the Bolshies [Burnetts] & the[ir] new-born. There is something solemn & adorable in the room where a mother lies with her new-born. And Molly [Burnett]'s eyes were sparkling, her hair tumbled & shining, her cheeks bright. Bolshie to match. (And I was mean & did not bring her down the Penrose daffodils, wanted them for myself. I will take them down tomorrow & more to read. & heaven bless

[10] From Drayton's sonnet 61, "Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part." This seems a significant text for Butts to be remembering as her marriage deteriorates.

them.) That's how it should be. I felt envious too—that may be partly fake—but not quite.

13 March 1933

The Macedonian out. Notice in *The Observer*, while I feel a hush over creation till I have heard more.

I want nothing really but to be out of doors, walk & garden & talk a little. Housekeep—not write.

Stravinsky tonight [on the radio]. Who would not sooner hear his Nightingale music to the best bird solo or chorus? Nature has her place, a pretty big one; but there are times when Art can beat her on her own ground.

15 March 1933

Letter from E. M. Forster—(this needs red ink).[11] "Non sum digna." And the loan of his book on Alexandria—to come. After all these years. Again & at the right time.

16 March 1933

It is a wild night. Come out, Grail. Slide down the wind & rain to that house.

Why is it that we take so little interest in the waning moon. The new, the crescous, the full—all the letters are full of her. Never later. What about my moons?

There might be a Grail night in one of them.

There might be more than one Cleopatra-night, a waning when she had counted on a waxing moon.

While the evil-magic side of the moon is the waning-time. Always? I think so. She rises so late. We see so little of her, forget all about her. So

[11] For reference to this letter of high praise from Forster and the general critical response to *The Macedonian* see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 329–35. An extract from *The Macedonian* was included as "Alexander the Great, 325 BC," in *The Imaginary Eye-Witness* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1937), 14–20. The seventeen contributors to this school textbook also include Walter Scott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Bulwer Lytton, and Charles Kingsley.

that she may be up to any mischief. Part of the time lost in the high day heavens too, & then she is without power? Probably.

18 March 1933

Forster's book come [*Alexandria* (1922)]. All that I wanted.

19 March 1933

Remember: What came into my mind at the word 'Father'—sense of the closeness of my own, with another, a quite different, kind of in-seeing. Adorable, friendly, unique as only these moments can be. The health & 'poise' that went with it. (How long can I keep it?) It has made everything in life exquisite, as tho' each act had more significance, not less. It is always so. Fear went with its coming. My adored father—if it is you, do not leave your child, who needs you. If only there could be one tangible sign. (I take it back, if it is 'wrong' to ask. I do not doubt—but for afterwards.)‡

So—a day pretty well perfect—in spite of Penzance & the usual minor distresses.

‡(How terribly it went in a bitter quarrel with Gabriel, now—for the time—resolved.)

20 March 1933

In thinking of Christianity, there is one way of attempting to appraise it which is not often done. I mean not in comparison with other world-wide contemporary faiths, but with regard to the classical religions & beliefs that it ousted. By this I mean not an historical study of those faiths in the past, but a contemporary one. For—even the Olympian-belief is not dead. And, in the same way as Christianity it has been hammered & walked over ("radiant & heart-searching hypotheses") & has undergone a development—outside art & antiquarianism—like its dispossessor. A less conscious one, less vocal, but fine minds have, nonetheless, often half-consciously, developed & deepened it.

While Gabriel & I noticed the other night one thing Christianity had done—that she had taken away from women their priestesshood. Now one can ask—how have they compensated for it? Certain heresies: the witch-cult of the middle-ages; the Society of Friends—also the monastic communities. And, more generally, the devotion to Our Lady.

But in what is going to happen to us, that balance is going to be corrected; & there the old faiths so variously kept alive, will have to teach us.

This is the shell-cracking of a really fruitful idea. These badly written paragraphs are about a living something.

21 March 1933

It stays, it stays—the wonderful sense that came the night before last. Not quite so perfectly, but it has not left me. (First day of the Curse & oppressed by it.) One feels—knows (?)—that one must also try & earn to keep it—by courage & patience & recollection, as well as by adoration.

(Cf. the bitter quarrel with Gabriel. 3 days torment for 3 days in Paradise. If only we could find a way.)

23 March 1933

A blessed thing that happened this morning among some badness, & a letter from Sir Roderick [Meiklejohn] to say that Theo Bartholomew was dead.[12]

The *Cambridge Ancient History* came, vii, full of "the withered corruptions of history." Until I came to something I had not known before, in the history of Macedonia, after the two generations of misery & disorder after the death of Alexander—the life of Antigonus [reigned B.C. 277–239].

Something also came out of those dry pages, like the perfume & a great & exquisite & wise & pure-hearted man. Not on the world-scale, but it blessed me.

30 March 1933

Very excellent book on Bacon by Mary Sturt [*Francis Bacon: A Biography* (1932)]. Buy this & a Latin Dictionary.

Title [for book on Cleopatra]: 'End of the Lagidae'
'Last of the Lagidae' ?

Francis Bacon on flowers:

"And because the breath of flowers is far sweeter in the air (whence it comes on you like the warbling of music) than in the hand, therefore nothing is more fit for delight than to know what be the flowers & plants that do best perfume the air" ["Of Gardens"].

[12] Augustus Theodore (Theo) Bartholomew (1882–1933), the Cambridge University Librarian and an expert on Samuel Butler, had been part of the Cambridge homosexual circle that included E. M. Forster and the musicologist E. J. Dent (1876–1957). He and Dent adopted Atkin when he was sent to Cambridge for officer-training in 1915, and later introduced him to the poet Siegfried Sassoon.

31 March 1933

Foundation of a *Science of Mysticism* that [J. N. W.] Sullivan asked for. It is time to make a few notes.

For some time, really for all my life, there have been recurrent moments of mystical perception. Lately, since my marriage with Gabriel, they have been fairly constant & memorable, & it seems to me that the time has come when I can fairly make notes, reduce them to some sort of description, at least.

3 April 1933

Remember: Gabriel dancing.

4 April 1933

Little article (For Hugh Ross Williamson?) on "Private Artists" or contemporary illiteracy—in both camps—good popular art & our kind, cf. *Private Lives* [(1930)] Coward. All-too private. No overtones, ambience or cribbings from what has been done. The entire corpus of our letters—& our thought—ignored. The pedigree (carefully?) left out. The opposite of Huxley, & only a partial phenomenon.

Looking across to the Longships [outcrop] from the barrow tonight, with the moon high & the sun gone. The pearl world.

8 April 1933

Lady Russell (Dora the Pouncer) came this afternoon.[13] Dear God—of all the perfect examples of what was bound to happen damn well happening with a conventional perfection that does one's mind good.

E. M. Forster calls the reign of Ptolemy II, Philadelphus of importance because he introduced brother & sister marriage, i.e. a hellenic gesture to egyptian customs. Today I see from Bevan's *The Hellenistic Age* [(1923)] that such marriages were common in the royal macedonian house. Which just shows—

[13] Dora Russell (1894–1986), British feminist writer and campaigner, living at "Carn Voel" above Porthcurno during her divorce from Bertrand Russell. See Ray Monk, *Bertrand Russell: The Ghost of Madness* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), 12–3.

17 April 1933

Remember: Angus [Davidson]'s visit & especially on Sunday the walk to Penberth; & coming home with our faces to the sun & the Atlantic.

5 May 1933

Quiet in the house, & work on the horizon & joy too—in each other & in a kind of Fortitude it seems is necessary at the moment.

For we are, I am pretty sure, on the threshold of a victory.

9 May 1933

I shall never forget 'the Furry Dance' at Helston—the Dance was all that vulgarisation can do.[14]

13 May 1933

Remember: The day Major Thynne [neighbour] & Naomi Royde-Smith came to tea.

21 May 1933

Remember: The waning moon sneaking off down the backstairs of the sky—about ten o'clock in the morning. Or going home with the milk it looked like.

24 May 1933

If it were not for the book [*Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra*], intolerable sadness. However, there is the book.

1 June 1933

For the new book of classical studies.

I. The Admirals at Arginusae. II. Caesar & the Pirates (done: pub. 'Cornhill' 1935. June?).[15] III. Mutilation of the Hermae. IV. Perseus & Andromeda—& Cassiope (or for a story?)

[14] Butts draws on this memory of the Furry Dance for a review written the following year: "Cornish Homes and Customs," *The Bookman*, 86, 511 (April 1934), 72.

[15] This parenthetical note, added several years later by Butts, refers to the story being published as "One Roman Speaks," in *The Cornhill Magazine*, 152, 910 (October 1935), 448–65, for which she is paid the then substantial sum of £16.6.0.

12 June 1933

Ist part of *Cleopatra* finished (21000 c words).

Remember: In preface—thanks to Weigall for his most "illuminating rereading of history." Facing the facts that other historians pass over, ignore, deplore, refuse—put a base construction on.

14 June 1933

Remember: Ducks—bronze & white enamel, by the stream, in the tangle of ragged robins & the large grasses & the hemlocks, against the sunlight.

13–15 June 1933

Added to the House: 2 pictures in watercolour by John Hookham, of Theo Bartholomew's rooms in Pythagoras House at Cambridge. They are very lovely & fill the house, here—or rather—it is filled with Theo.

22 June 1933

Added to the House: the tall bookshelves on the right-hand side of the fire. Edges marbled by Gabriel. Quarter filled now—but filling (for mine?). The glass floats used along the shelves for bookstops.

3 July 1933

Rest from *Cleopatra*. The Garden. [Charles Williams] *The Place of the Lion* [(1931)].

Idea walking up through the fields—another reason why Christianity clicked; that it helped give a final shape to the other beliefs in gods & heroes who were born of virgins & who lived & died for men. The idea was about, had always been about "haunting the imagination of the dark-white Mediterranean peoples" as Wells says. (Abyss of stupidity? Just about bottomless, & a summing-up of modern intellectual error.) Christianity gave it a personality, books, gossip even; exalted it & brought it nearer home.

Before there was Orpheus, Prometheus, Osiris, even Adonis Tammuz- & our whole faith is permeated with Egypt—Isis & Osiris.[16]

One would like to know how many peoples, as well as the Jews, were

[16] These are all vegetation gods—Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian.

asking for a new hero—not a Messiah, but someone very like it—a "helper of the world, a friend of man" to be born again.

Copies of *Ashe of Rings*

Betty; Roderick Meiklejohn; Ruth Manning-Sanders; Ross Williamson.

25 July 1933

Remember: Keep a calendar of this year—a wild thyme year, lit amethyst sheets even, the largest patches I have ever seen. In the sun they look as though they had some quality like a stone for reflecting light. Or, even more, as though they were lit from within.

30 July 1933

I wish I knew how to make Gabriel happy. Of course, I could not make him happy, but he has the keys of happiness in his hands—& of my happiness—& lately he so often will not turn them.

[6] August 1933

Last night, for the second time, working on a classical book, came the sense of suddenly wakened memory. As though down an infinitely long time-corridor came this picture of the altar & the statue seen & suddenly remembered. This & the other time are comparable with no other mind-creation process that I remember.

11–14 August 1933

Odo [Cross] & Angus Wilson's visit.[17] One of the best times we have ever had in our lives. Camilla's success. A four-day-party. Joy & joy & joy & joy. Ended today, after lunch. Remember—St Ives by way of Zennor. At Zennor, peace in the church & magic by the great stone & friendliness at the Tinner Arms & the new renewal of Odo's & my love for each other. St Ives—lobsters—the Inn with Two Eyes. Flight home.

Tony Butts comes to stay at Tebel Vos 4–13 September.

[17](Paul) Odo Cross, whose family estate Butts visits the following year, is now living with Angus Wilson (the namesake of the British caricaturist).

7 September 1933

With Tony to Penberth. Remember: on our way back, the Orchard. Green & gold-apple trees, & in a row before their trunks, pink lilies rising out of green-bronze sheaths. Phalloi (as Tony said). Then, to the right, the red apple tree—the fruits were huge, the branches heavy—& a little way off the smoke from a rubbish heap, burning blue, blowing up behind it, blowing through; veiling it, pouring off & away. While on a high bank, seen through the branches some way off, a patch of gold flowers. Tony said Renoir. Good enough? It was a glory.

16 September 1933

Quiet in the House. Camilla gone; Tony gone; Angus [Davidson] gone; Odo & Angus [Wilson] gone. The stillness between us very lovely & this room taking delicate fire & reflection, light-point answering light-point. Glass & brass & polished wood—"there is neither speech nor language" [Psalm 18].

18 September 1933

Cottage hunting for Angus [Davidson].[18]

That this house—with others like Salterns—is a trap for more worlds than one. For one more anyway; through the candles & the shine & the wave sound.

19 September 1933

To reread Strachey's *Books & Characters* [(1922)], like lying back to sip an exquisite wine. O the loss of that amity & that wit.

22 September 1933

Notes: First novel-reviewing that's come my way [for] *John O'London's Weekly*.

[18] Butts spends a great deal of time and energy in 1933–4 searching for and then overseeing the restoration of Davidson's cottage, No Place. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 341–2, 357.

9 October 1933

Thrown head over heels in the shadow-half of the year. Low sky, warm, wet air-drift, & the bay—a quarter mile fringe of torn water, ravelled into huge flowers, last gasp of some out-at-ocean hurricane. Indigo under grey, & on the cliffs the bracken like quenched fire. If only we had trees to complete the ground-cycle. You can hear, through the full-throated sea, the shriek of ground pebbles, & the skies are leaning over us, as if they were putting us to sleep. I should like to sleep too—wake with the spring. Instead must begin our winter-works. And I am in love—Gabriel delights me—the line of his flanks & back, the star-distilled eyes, the pure skin. This is true of us that, of all people, we have everything beautiful in our time.

11 October 1933

Days as if the outside world had forgotten us. *Ashe of Rings* a flop & nature hurrying us all in with the baths of ocean.[19] Under the sea. Time—life—assigned to patience. While there is a sequence. First [Charles Williams's] *The Place of the Lion*, then came Merezhkovsky's books for review.[20] Then, from Betty [Montgomery], Williams's plays; & always the accompaniment of 'The Waste Land'.

As Ross Williamson says in his book on Eliot, I stick out my platinum rod for these to fuse round it & make the change, the creation, which shall be my statement, my understanding, my Grail.[21]

Lunch at Betty Manning's [unidentified]. Chy-an-al Moor. Something exquisite about it—the life of a country woman again, fond of dogs, birds, something of a poet. Something austere, hardy, plain; & after lunch an adorable walk, through the fields & the high cliffs between Newlyn & Mousehole. A delicate track across stiles—but it was not the view across

[19] A flop perhaps in terms of sales; the critical response, however, to *Ashe of Rings,* with Atkin's enchanting dust jacket design, is positive. See Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 342–3.

[20] Butts reviews Merezhkovsky's *Jesus the Unknown* and *The Secret of the West* in "A Russian Prophet," *Time and Tide*, 14, 4 (14 October 1933), 228–30.

[21] Ross Williamson refers to Butts in the *The Poetry of T. S. Eliot* (1932), the first critical book on Eliot. While writing it he declares to Butts that he will write a companion volume on Butts. See Williamson to Butts, undated [June 1932], Butts papers. Unfortunately he never does. See Blondel, *Mary Butts,* 305.

the bay, the typical 'magnificent view,' but what we saw, turning away from it inland, Carn Brea to Carn Brea, Sancreed, Morvah, dim holy place after another, hill & woods soaring. 'Mysterious, beautiful', the Grail Country. I would give a great deal to have it always before me. Like a land on wings.

2 November 1933

[From draft letter to Leonard Moore, Butts's agent:]

C [*Cleopatra*] is still in the ditch. All my energies are flowing into my garden. Barren half a year ago; not too bad this summer.

[List of plants, headed]: Odo['s gifts] to the Garden.

Strangeness. Last spring I read Rimbaud, without much understanding. Then commentaries, MacCarthy [*Portraits*]. This evening, open again, & a lot is clear—or clearer—like a mist thinning. While I? Is it true of me to say: "J'ai perdu mon propre mystère" [I have lost my own sense of mystery]? No, not yet, I think.

Besides, "as a matter of creeping fact" is there nothing but the internal world? Is the Universe a nothing except in as much as I am sensible of it? In one's own case, what one has to say about it? I distrust this 'mysticisme du Verbe' while it excites me.

15 November 1933

This evening, just off sunset, a fiery storm sky across turquoise—watching for the fish. Two little boats tumbling in the bay & on top two Huers, speechless, directing them with gorse bushes. It was rather awful. One of them stood, black against the gold, in one spot, but his body & face contorted, writhing frantic.

It was more than fish-food searching. It was a rite.[22]

28 November 1933

Notes on a bad day: In bed with a chill & [Romola Nijinsky's] *The Last days of Nijinsky* [(1933)].

[22] Butts incorporates this experience in the article she writes the following year. See 9 February 1935.

Tears for the ballet & exquisite memories & sharp & unbearably poignant. O daimones—release the store of memory within me. Make it possible for me to use what I have lived. I have no deeper prayer than that.

One reason to be glad we have lived in this century, one healing for the War—that we have lived to see & know, adore, saturate ourselves with the Ballet Russe. The one thing (1933) that has made this cursed century glorious.

6 December 1933

This year's best book—*Leaves from a Psychist's Case-Book* [(1933)]—Harry Price. At last, a summary of where we are, what we may believe & disbelieve, what has & what has not been done.

1934

5 January 1934

Mr [Frank] Baker came. His friend is dead.[1]

c. 1–7 January 1934

Naomi Royde-Smith, Ruth Manning-Sanders. The unforgettable revelations, criticism, exchanges—delights.

Then came [Charles Williams's] *Many Dimensions* [(1931)].

14 January 1934

Last Saturday night. The storm. Came into the "salon" [living room] to see to windows & looked out into the bay. An awful sight. The waves roaring in, incandescent—on a moonless night—with their own whiteness. A dreadful swirling & a white mist of spray rising from their crests.

But it was this light, the incandescence, that was so awful, as though we saw a secret. Secret of the night-sea. I cannot forget that light, nor the mist that rose with it. As if the bay were a cup & mist we think of as a quiet thing. But this rose out of unparalleled turmoil & disturbance, a 'scum' is not the word. It was a kind of efflorescence. It seemed not to run with the wind, but to rise as though not affected by it.

24 January 1934

High half-moon in mid sky. The "visible Pan." The great stars like pricked lace against a grey veil. While the long band of quiet winter surf under the moon brings back blue & gold & all the business of the "wine-dark" [Homer]. Why? Seen "through a glass darkly," a maquette [palette] of the colour & pace of the Mediterranean? Walking home across the fields I could not make out. Or why the January moon & a grey tiger should bring back 'Hellas.'[2]

[1] Frank Baker (1908–82), British writer and musician, then living in Cornwall, organist at St. Hilary's Church, Marazion. Baker refers to her kindness following the death of his lover Marcus in his chapter on Butts in his autobiography, *I Follow but myself* (London: Peter Davies, 1968).

[2] It is unclear whether Butts is thinking of Shelley's poem "Hellas" or Ancient Greece. Probably a combination of both; see *The Crystal Cabinet*, 116.

1 February 1934

A Plenitude—I think it was [Dorothy Sayers's] *The Nine Tailors* [(1934)] & spring & its days & the garden & a little moon & a particularly clear fire, & a peace that passed understanding—a mixture of spiritual victory with bodily bien-être.

Today a black & lightning sea-black crystal laced with white fire. An awful loveliness.

Or—classic style—"the sea today gave an impression of darkness that may even be called black, an impression enhanced by contrast with the whiteness of the foam. A pleasure to the eye which with the threatening of storm had in it an element of weariness not unakin to fear." Too laboured.

Or—"the sea today was of so dark a colour that one might even call it black, an impression enhanced by contrast with the foam—a pleasure to which the advancing storm added an element of fear." U-m-m-m-m.

[From draft letter to her mother; that her marriage to John Rodker] . . . was one of those War-marriages between very young people, driven desperate with all we had been & had to endure.

5 February 1934

"Mysticism is based on a positive belief in the existence of life within life, of deep correspondences & affinities, not less real than those to which the common superficial consciousness of mankind bears witness." Dean Inge, *Christian Mysticism*.

11 February 1934

Remember: Yesterday, pure air & blue & the turn of the year. All day gardening. Under the hedge at Chapel Idny. Planting here at dusk. A Plenitude.

For an essay: What has happened to People's Taste?
(ref. especially to the Furry Dance—done for *Bookman*)
Also Article, critical on Baron Corvo. (done)[3]

[3] See note for 9 May 1933. Butts, "Baron Corvo," *The London Mercury*, 30, 175 (May 1934), 619–24.

1 March 1934

Hope out of the reviewing business:

Adelphi, *Observer*, *Book Guild*, *Cornhill*, *Current Literature*, *Manchester Guardian*, *John O'London's Weekly*, *Spectator*, *Listener*, *Life & Letters Today*, *Morning Post*, *Everyman*, *Criterion*, *Mercury*.[4]

9 March 1934

Cleopatra finished.

Exquisite relief. Now I can write just what I like. Refresh myself, play with the House. Adorn it & the garden. For even when I did not touch it, as these last six weeks & more, it hung over my head. Now, well or ill done, it's over. I see I do not like commissioned work. Now for stories (make list).

STORIES TO WRITE

I The Lover Who Told a Lie (done)
II The House-moving & the Parents who would not Help (?)
III The Harpy-Tomb (finish)
IV Bishops Translating
V Caesar & the Pirates (?)
VI The Present from the Castle
VII Mr Minnifee's Best Clothes.
VIII The Man Who Could have been a Painter.
IX 'My name is Yardley'
X The Trees (Little Thornsdale & after) (?)
XI A House that was Two Places at once (?)
or is that done in "What the Moon Saw"?

18 March 1934

Robert Graves' *I Claudius* [(1934)] arrived.[5]

It will outlast [Jack Lindsay's] *Rome for Sale* [(1934)].[6] It goes soberly, realistically, awfully.

[4] Butts reviews for almost all of these journals; see bibliographical section, "Reviews," in Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 516–22.

[5] Butts reviews *I Claudius* in "Scandal or History," *Time and Tide*, 15, 18 (5 May 1934), 584–6.

[6] Butts reviews *Rome for Sale* in "The Past Lives Again," *The Bookman*, 86, 511 (April 1934), 44–5. A shared interest in history underlies the mutually informative

Banse, *Germany, Prepare for War!* [(1934)]. Last word on the Nazis? It looks like it.[7]

Time & Tide this autumn [want] "short stories—light topical sketches. 1,000–2,000 words."

21 April 1934

Yesterday Ellis Roberts sent *Orthodoxy Sees It Through* [(1934) to review].[8] *Domine, non sum digna*.

3 May 1934

Gabriel has laid a great many jokes. Bless him. It is like Heaven.

New story going like a dream—why dream? As if it were writing itself. The overtones finding themselves, always a good sign.

22 May 1934

E. F. Benson, *More Spook Stories* [(1934)]. Not remarkable, except the one about the Black Mass & the death which came to that family ["The Sanctuary"]. As Gabriel said, his stories are variations on two or three themes. (These should be worked out when I've all the books, if ever.)

8 June 1934

Remember: As I came into this room about 10.30—through the windows the sea & sky in the last light—inside blue jade & pearl.

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and lengthy correspondence between Butts and the Australian writer and editor, Jack Lindsay (1900–1990), from 1934 onwards, although they first met in 1928. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 352–4.

[7] Butts is reading this pro-Nazi account by the geographer Banse as part of an attempt to understand the political and anti-Semitic situation in Germany at this time: "Of course, horrible injustice has been done there," she wrote in a letter, "only it's been so advertised that at present I'm using my energies to find out what the other side has to say for themselves." Butts to Angus Davidson, 4 February 1934, Butts papers. Some of the other books she read include Hilaire Belloc's *Jews* (1922) and Hecker's *Religion and Communism* (1933). See Introduction and Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 349–50.

[8] *Orthodoxy Sees It Through*: a collection of essays on the relevance of belief in contemporary society.

7 July 1934

THE NEW BOOK [*The Crystal Cabinet*]

My childhood—how God, art & magic were learned. Praise of my father, praise of Salterns—both dead.

13 July 1934

Heresies (T. S. Eliot's suggestion).[9]

Beyond the Mexique Bay [(1933)] by Aldous Huxley. Definite (and sudden—suddenly clear) proof that his mind is failing.

What I mean is that as Lunn says in *Orthodoxy Sees It Through*, these people don't prove, they state—Aldous Huxley is becoming a classic example of this.

Yet he can still be searching in his artist's job.

Remember: What happened between Marjorie Bagot & Christine Ashcroft [Sennen neighbours], the right & wrongs of it.[10]

20 July 1934

[Before I die] it would be good to write the Salterns book [*The Crystal Cabinet*] & one or two other things. And to meet Charles Williams.

18 August 1934

Angus [Davidson] will have No Place [thatched cottage in Sennen Covel].

4 October 1934

Afternoon yesterday with clairvoyant in Penzance. [Butts fairly impressed.]

11 November 1934

Armistice Day. Sennen 1934. Remember Mr Minnifee on guard, during the Silence, against the [Sennen] Church door. It was a transformation, a

[9] "The Heresy Game," *The Spectator*, 158 (12 March 1937), 466–7.

[10] Basis of Butts's story "The Warning," in *Life and Letters To-day*, 12, 61 (January 1935), 396–404. The publication of this story causes Butts neighbourly difficulties. See 17 September 1936.

magic. He became—say our Sea-Power on guard. Then later, at the Cenotaph, his sword drawn.

Later, Gabriel told a story: It was his first day at Eton & the waterpipes went wrong. So Sachie [Sacheverell Sitwell] to make the party go, said Dorothy Sayers was a bore; & Siegfried [Sassoon] still had shell-shock, sat on a cushion on the floor.

13 November 1934

Remember—my desk in its beauty. The wood after two years' polishing. All the niches in order—MSS, references, letters, etc. The large square of coloured blotting-paper. Two glass pillar candlesticks; my seal, the dragon on its jade block. Pale blue Bristol ink-bottle; the stamp-box of inlaid straw; two glass paperweights with 'magics' inside. The little cup for tags, shells, rings, precious pebbles. Last of all the glass goblet, full, today with wallflower & fuscia. Then, the crystal bottle that came from St Ives.

7 December 1934

The discovery of Father Walke, & a place to pray.[11]

Charles Williams, 2 books. With Chloe Burnett [from *Many Dimensions*] I adore that Stone which is the first matter.

9 December 1934

Last night was a horror.

I had reached an end, could bear this hideous parody of marriage no longer.[12]

But I believe I could still help him—if I loved him enough. And it is my failure if I don't.

[11] This is the first reference to St Hilary's Church, Marazion, near Penzance, and to its controversial minister, Father Bernard Walke. For the significance of this church in Butts's life from December 1934 onwards (her name can still be seen on a tablet inside the church to this day), see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 362–7.

[12] Throughout their marriage Atkin's drinking does not lessen. His work and health are increasingly affected. He will die in May 1937, only six weeks after Butts herself.

10 December 1934

Our marriage is as nearly over as not.

Gabriel returns to Newcastle.

31 December 1934

A Discovery—*Men without Art* [(1934)] Wyndham Lewis (More later).

1935

3 January 1935 [Tebel Vos, Sennen]

[Charles Williams], *The Place of the Lion* [(1931)]

Re-read—This time I understood—this much anyhow—that the lion has an archetype corresponding in the Sea. Which is what I had begun to think myself.

An imagination—almost a passion. Suppose Wyndham Lewis, submitted 'to the last ounce of his soul' to the power he admits he respects, & of which he seems abysmally ignorant—then we might get something. As it is, it seems to me, even in his 'rightest' work, that he's a man a millionth of an inch off the point. Not because it is satire; that can be as perfectly adjusted as any other form, but because perhaps he has no centre but the intuitions of his deep & haughty mind.

A fore-seeing. We are in for a new period in Christianity. It will cease to be 'wistful'—especially Christian art. Or 'hearty' or any sort of compromise. We shall be a minority—but a minority new-born.[1]

4 January 1935

Place of the Lion. Again out today. Tiepolo sky, north wind, the mist hardened out into marble check, purple & grey & gold. The blue behind, as hard as lapis. As though I were on the edge, the earth's archetype, not the sea's. The under and overfrets nagged it aside (my fault).

24 January 1935

Hopeless letters from Gabriel [staying with his aunts in Newcastle].

Found a magic stone on Grumbla Moor.

Begun the autobiography [*The Crystal Cabinet*].

25 January 1935

GOOD NEWS. Angus [Davidson] tells me that E. M. Forster has got a policeman now.[2]

[1] This is Butts's first explicit reference to her recent conversion to Anglo-Catholicism.

[2] Reference to Forster's relationship with Bob Buckingham. See Furbank, *E. M. Forster: A Life. Vol 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 188, note 1.

In early January 1935 Butts had sent out a questionnaire to a number of writers about possible supernatural experiences. Given a sufficient response, Methuen was going to publish a selection edited by Butts and Algernon Blackwood. While the project comes to nothing, it does prompt a letter from Charles Williams to which Butts drafts a reply:

Note—difficulty in writing this for which my heart has cried out.

It is impossible for me to say the delight your letter gave me. . . . literally my spiritual recovery began to date from the day the first of your books came into my hands.

While, for some time an idea has been suggesting itself to me, which I will dare at least to propose to you—to write a critical study of your work as a whole (*The Mercury* would take it or *Life and Letters*).[3]

Either spiritual life will be lived again in England or Brave New World is in prospect. Of the writers of our time yours is by far the best witness—to the heart of the matter.

31 January 1935

FOR A STORY: Return of Angus from the sea (Done).[4]

1 February 1935

These days as they pass are rich days, every detail stands out, full of colour & form—3-dimensional; & above all there is, after nearly a year, the return of Charles Williams.

[From draft of letter to Charles Williams:]

Thank you very much for allowing me to try.

I was started off by a most beloved friend, Mrs [Betty] Montgomery] (née Ponsonby) who lives at Windsor. She sent me *The Place of the Lion*.

[3] Unfortunately this was not published because the editor of *The Cornhill* felt that Charles Williams was insufficiently well known to justify an article on his work. See Lord Gorell to Butts, 31 July 1936. Butts papers.

[4] This became Butts's story "Look Homeward, Angel," *Life and Letters To-day*, 18, 12 (Summer 1938), 74–80.

8 February 1935

What shall I do when Angus is gone from here?[5]

9 February 1935

Opal evening, blue & sea a quintessence, an Aphrodite—exquisiteness. All Hellas. Which one?

Article on the fishing here & today's mullet catch—Angus' suggestion, bless him.[6]

Harcourt Wesson Bull, whom Butts had met in Villefranche in 1928, is now Angus Davidson's lover and staying at No Place.

21 February 1935

Rabbit-names for Angus & Harcourt—"Blest Pair of Sirens" [Milton, "At a Solemn Musick."]

Angus is going to write to Gabriel—his image of the Ostrich only too true.

Discovery of Williams' *English Poetic Mind* [(1932)]—& all that it is about & implies.

25 February 1935

One great delight, Dawson's *Medieval Religion* [(1935)]—now get <u>all</u> his books.[7]

Write to Ellis Roberts. "Have you noticed I've become a Christian again?"

[From draft letter to Charles Williams:]

[5] Angus Davidson is frequently away from No Place, his thatched cottage, a few minutes walk from Butts's bungalow.

[6] Butts, "The Seine Net: Community Fishing in Cornwall," *The Manchester Guardian* (8 March 1935), 9.

[7] Christopher Henry Dawson (1889–1970), British cultural historian and educational theorist. His writings assert the importance of Christian belief to modern history.

Good for Tom Eliot. His work has had, aesthetically, the profound effect it is having on my generation (his) & the one after ours. Aesthetic influence—the prosody, for example of Gerontion. Rather dreadful to think that his real, but rather peculiarly undervitalised genius, has had to do the work as poetic influence, which in the last century was parcelled out between TB [the best?] & all the rest of them.

My book is just *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra*—on the same lines as *The Macedonian* but much longer.

Frightened to death by your poem, "Witchcraft"—an awful gale has sprung up, not modified as it is in most places, but here, round the corner of L.G. [Looking Glass]—the naked storm—(Ruining my garden with the hyacinths half-up)—screaming & penetrating & I was alone in the gathering night with it.[8]

28 February 1935

Remember: Benediction out on a star-walk last night. (Who calls country life dull?)

1 March 1935

[From draft letter to Charles Williams:]

Your poems arrived. All praise to the one "I also am Lancelot." That's it. And the exquisite one about your Lady & the Mouse.

Do you know [Edward Sackville-West's] *Sun in Capricorn* [(1934)] (praise etc). Because its truth is terrible to me. Especially now I realise that my brother (he was at Eton with Sackville-West) is somehow in the party.[9]

2 March 1935

Yet today I praised God & Our Lady from my soul for this afternoon's gardening. A nature sacrament with the flowers & the earth & the quickening sun.

[8] Inspiration for Butts's "Spring Storm," *The Manchester Guardian* (11 June 1935), 16.

[9] Edward Sackville-West (1901–65), British writer who admires Butts's work. See his review of *The Crystal Cabinet* in "A Poetical Autobiography," *The New Statesman and Nation*, 13, 329 (12 June 1937), 974. *Sun in Capricorn* contains a fictional account of his school experiences.

Added to the House: An ash-tray ([from] Harcourt)—white porcelain with my Zodiac-sign, Sagittarius, on it in gold.

Remember: Real Dr [M. R.] James—I've told no-one—what happened, coming home that dark night, about a fortnight ago. After dark, say 7 7.30, black as a crow's inside. So returned by the main road, through 'The Bad Lands.'[10] Walking briskly, without a light, & just before the top of the hill I saw, not visibly, but with awful distinctiveness across my mind's eye, a full size figure I wish I could forget. Facing me, taller than I, in black, with a white dead face, looking at me with a smiling stare of such malevolence as I would gladly forget. I had not been thinking of such things, I hurried home nearly in terror. I had, I think, been repeating a psalm, & there was a protection round me. Soon, as I felt, I was out of its orbit, but sure that it belonged there, & that strip of road. What I said to myself was a hanged man who still cannot get away. If it was a man at all & not an evil spirit who has a 'beat' along that road with the evil marsh behind & the wood.

9 March 1935

All-in-Wrestling last night at Camborne. Beauty of the Black Panther—his animal head.

Managed this morning a thing I am again beginning to understand—how shall I describe it?—a satisfactory sequence of prayers. Morning devotions 'like' a work of art. Properly begun & the rest followed, not a set office, but rising one from the other, followed with my mind, & something more—a sense of communion. This very badly told. Only a few minutes.

10 March 1935

[From draft letter to Charles Williams:]

This is the first truth of your work—Is it not written on the Emerald Tablet?—"That which is below is as that which above."[11] There are the archetypes & here with us, the repeats & images & microcosms & signa-

[10] Reference to Metcalfe's "The Bad Lands"—see 1927 note 7.
[11] See 1919 note 11.

tures. It is the tracing of them & discovering them, in the awful moments when the imagination fuses & becomes something more, or indeed in tracing how Spenser's allegory is not identity, that is mastered.

20 March 1935

Fun with *The Romantic Agony* of Signor Praz.[12]

22 March 1935

Added to the House:

Angus' gift, a large blue witch ball, probably new, but a good copy.

23 March 1935

Remember: Yesterday at No Place after tea, as I sat & polished the old books, that here I'd made an idea flesh with a vengeance.

End March 1935

Gardening, gardening, gardening—Angus' garden, my garden—our needs as usual satisfied. Exchange of plants.

11 April 1935

For the MG [*Manchester Guardian*]: Changes here in peasant mentality.[13]

Giotto's wave-tower on the Brisons.

15 April 1935

Yesterday: Remember: Lunch Edward Sackville-West. Oh Joy!

22 April 1935

Angus' tea-party, & Edward Sackville-West from another angle & the adorable Rosamund Lehmann.

[12] Angus Davidson doubtless gave this book to Butts, as he translated Mario Praz's *The Romantic Agony* in 1933.

[13] While the manuscript of "Little Town in the west" is among her papers, the published article remains untraced.

26 April 1935

These are days when there is not enough time because almost Everything is significant with a next to intolerable interest & significance. I'd need to be seven or more persons to do justice to all there is here to learn, to discover, to make, to 'approfondir' [deepen understanding of], to enjoy. Bees hovering round an invisible, Paradise-grown flower.

30 April 1935

Glories of Charles Williams. Since Coleridge what criticism have we to compare with it? The *English Poetic Mind* [(1932)]. On Wordsworth is final. And what commentaries c[oul]d be written on his comment (ending) "Poetry has to do all its own work; in return it has all its own authority?"

2 May 1935

Prelim. Puff—*Cleopatra*. Letter from Tony [Butts].

22 May 1935

Remember: the evening light—something I have never seen before, not to such an extent. The whole world, sea & moor & hill, dipped in turquoise, like a dye, 'laking' in levels, of a brilliant exquisiteness beyond belief—a physical rapture.

Ordered: Frank Baker, *The Twisted Tree* [(1935)]; [Bernard] Walke, *20 Years at St Hilary* [(1935)].

Butts's Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra*, which she dedicates "To Betty Montgomery* Amicae delectissimae*," is published by Heinemann on 27 May. The critical response to Butts's feminist account of Cleopatra is extremely positive.*[14]

[14] For more information about the positive reception of *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 380–384. See also 6 June 1935.

6 June 1935

All sorts of comforts came, books & friends & exquisitenesses out-of-doors, & Humbert Wolfe in *The Observer*.[15]

7 June 1935

For the patchwork:

Centre—yellow satin star (6); green beetles round it (6); outer circle, wine velvet (6). This is excellent.

13 June 1935 LONDON

All the greens coming up, red rock & rock Valerian, a tunnel through all the roses. Then London; then Bayswater; then that memory. O Sandy, Sandy [Cecil Maitland], my only love.

Then the walk. Through Kensington Gardens, the Palace, the kites, the Garden. Summer passion & the loveliness getting won.

The Shining day—Thursday

A. J. Symons.[16]

Remember—the sense of power, of work accomplished, after Heinemann [publisher of *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra*], after my Agents.

Then there was Knole "which is sanctuary."[17] If rooms were prepared for me there, on the condition that I was never to leave them again or its precincts, I think I should say "yes."

mid-July 1935 At Tidcombe [Odo Cross's home in Wiltshire].

There is what Odo said: the first night: "I'm queer, but I so love you." This friendship it has taken all these years to make. And his Angus [Wilson] when he came to see me that night: "It's you who are the miracle." I must remember these things.

[15] Humbert Wolfe, "'Her Infinite Variety': Cleopatra of Alexandria," *The Observer* (2 May 1935).

[16] Alphonse James Albert Symons (1900–41), British biographer, bibliographer, wit, cofounder of Wine and Food Society. A year earlier Butts praises Symons' biography *The Quest for Corvo* in her review "A Man Possessed," *Time and Tide*, 15, 7 (17 February 1934), 212–4. She and Symons correspond, see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 350–1.

[17] Knole House, Kent. Because of patrilineal inheritance, inherited by Edward rather than his cousin Vita Sackville-West. For its resonance (Butts felt similarly disinherited from Salterns), see Blondel, *Mary Butts* 378–9.

27 July 1935 [Tebel Vos, Sennen]

Restored to the House—from Paris: The gold & black batique, the lacquer standish, the wood & ivory cigarette box. the leather book-box, the blue glass ink-bottle. Cedric [Morris]'s picture. The photographs. Odo's crystal bracelet.

Added: The malachite cigarette box.

6 August 1935

Remember: (Shall I have much longer to repeat that?) tea at Angus' yesterday. Because of the two Stracheys and, but most, because of Edward Sackville-West.[18]

11 August 1935

Re-read Machen on the Sancgrail ["The Secret of the Sangraal" (1907)]. Understood again—& its principle—that it is the rule of great mystical & magical experience that it cannot be told directly. It must be expressed by an indirection. In the matter of the Grail, art, 12th century art, the art, for example of Salisbury came in contact with the experience, the existence in the tangible world of the Sanctity, & expressed it by means of a translation. Hence the Grail romances, & how much further it gets one, I don't know.

Finally. This night. How the book is to be written. Not the development of one theme—O hours of meditation; but the lot! Using the short-story technique—to fuse them all. I can do it, making it one living 'historie.' Because it is one history, & my relating will be the making of what I have to say.[19]

21 August 1935

Found after ten years—verses by St John of the Cross [copied out].

Urgent: T. R. Glover, *The Ancient World* [(1935)].

[18] Probably Alix Strachey (1892–1973), editor and translator, and her husband, James Beaumont Strachey (1887–1967), psychoanalyst and translator of Freud. Responsible for getting the Woolfs' Hogarth Press to publish the papers of the International Psycho-Analytical Library.

[19] This is the first reference to Butts's next book, "Julian the Apostate." She dedicates it to Harcourt Wesson Bull. Only the introduction was completed by her death.

11 September 1935

Remember: Rainbow-hair on the wave-crests running in—shocks & shocks of iris-drift.

19 September 1935

[From draft of letter to Edward Sackville-West:]

I, after years of disbelief, your kind of disbelief, i.e. every fashionable kind of scepticism, magic etc, after years of really quite hard work, came back, by entirely intellectual paths to belief again. As affording the sole satisfactory clue to history, to man's development, to the necessities of his future.

21 October 1935

The Book [*The Crystal Cabinet*] leaps ahead—Almost 'into the straight' now.

21 October 1935

The plain-song from St Hilary rings in my ears.

22 October 1935

From Masefield's new 'magic' book [*The Box of Delights* (1933)]. Very good but only in bits.

7 November 1935

Horae aurae Tidcomensis [Golden Hours at Tidcombe, Odo Cross's home]—Oct 27th–Nov

All the things we have done—only here one never wants to put them down.

1st day—night rather—London. ER [Ellis Roberts]. Then 'in the Pit' (Cedric [Morris]). Next day, walk on the Downs once here. Trees on fire. Next day, walk in the rain. Sang all the way home. Visit to Lytton Strachey's house [Ham Spray]. Ghosts & incredible decadence. Next day the cross-country run & the woods. Next day, Stonehenge & Wilton. Today—morning Down-walk. Afternoon, church.

These are no more than bones, an anatomy of the exquisite things that happen here.

Stonehenge in itself, is rather overwhelming. "Character," said Odo, & he was right. But I think what wearied us was—is—the horrors done to Salisbury Plain. The plague of blood-red huts is bad enough, patches of blood on the green land. But the accompaniments, the slum purlieus of each camp. Hoardings & vile villas & petrol-stations, & that most beastly sight, the rotting bodies of cars. As Odo said: "They scream at you in a kind of pain." Miles of barbed wire too over the green turf, & here & there a farm or an ancient cottage in a hollow, as if stranded, cut off abandoned from what had once been its own.

Once out of it, the rest of the Plain received us & blessed us, unviolated.

8 November 1935 [Tebel Vos, Sennen]

Remember—all this week motoring with Odo & Angus, the woods, the woods. The fiercest autumn I have ever seen, which here we hardly see at all.[20] The September storm had not destroyed them. They burned in glory together. From London all the way down to Tidcombe, and there & all over the Plain there were trees on fire. Crimson to pale saffron & the beeches, above all, coal-red.

Angus [Davidson] today on Llewellyn Powys "twined about with tartan shawls" & his distressing "literary diarrhoea."[21]

10 November 1935

Last night, the heart-breaking body-destroying dream. I met Cecil Maitland. He had not been dead, only abroad (New Zealand?) & had thought it better for people to tell me he was dead. Lett [Haines] & Cedric [Morris], who were there, knew this. Lett enjoyed himself. I was with them & we met at a restaurant (London?). He was about to take Vita Sackville-West out to lunch. I think Eddy [Sackville-West] was there, in the background, noticing. He [Cecil] looked exceedingly handsome, but oddly dressed. Black Stetson hat, dark shirt & dark red tie. He was angry with

[20] There are few trees in this part of Cornwall.

[21] See Butts's review of Llewellyn Powys's *Dorset Essays* in "Dorset Essays, Scenes and Memories," *The Sunday Times* (24 November 1935), 16.

me & brusque. I reasoned about it: "How can it be true & all that happened, after his death, a fake, a lie?"

Not easy to write of the pain & fatigue of this day. As if I were half dead, aching limbs & unspeakable awareness of longing for him.

As I lay awake, about 5.30, bleeding with sorrow, I remembered one or two things as tho' in significant relief.

Is it part—a continuation—of the other, sharp, profound, working, waking vision? Perhaps—probably—not. I must not fool myself through longing. I can only pray.

24 November 1935

Dorothy Sayers' *Gaudy Night* [(1935)]. Again—"if it ever occurs to people to value the honour of the mind equally with the honour of the body, we shall get a social revolution of a quite unparalleled sort—& very different from the kind that is being made at this moment."[22]

30 November 1935

Exquisite day—all day in this room by a fire, reading classics. Not dressed even, resting, resting. With only Tanaquil [Davidson's cat] for company. As easy a day as I've ever spent. Read [Racine's] *Phèdre*—as if that isn't joy enough, [Alexander] Pope, Lytton Strachey, & the precis of the Ruxton Case from *The News of the World*.[23]

[22] This book appeals to Butts's feminism: "Please read it. Not describing a perfection, but an organon, what women of my kind have been searching for; had, according to the age, in the medieval Abbeys; lost since & have just in the last fifty years been able to restore to ourselves.

Please read it. Anyhow believe that cocoa & stuffing & pedantry . . . [have] passed away. Real life & real learning taking their place." Butts to Angus Davidson, 25 November 1935, Butts papers.

[23] Dr Buck Ruxton was convicted of murdering his wife and maid. He was hung on the 12 May 1936. The case gave rise to a children's playground song: "There's blood in the kitchen, there's blood on the knife, Dr Buck Ruxton you've murdered your wife . . ."

1936

16 January 1936

Remember: Feeling well again after so long, the hard long walk with Angus on the moor road. Do not forget.

Order: Boas, *Lytton Strachey* [(1935)]; Christie, *A. B. C. Murders* [(1936)]; G. K. Chesterton, *The Well & the Shadows* [(1935)].

21 January 1936

Remember: Friday night, when we knew that the King [George V] would die—the vigil I & Angus found ourselves keeping.

Also Aldous [Huxley] on Henry Vaughan's "when spirits their fair kindred catch" ["The Night"]. Also Shaw on Kipling, dead.[1]

21 January 1936

[Butts copies out from Chesterton's *The Well and the Shadows* in a draft letter to Bolshie Burnett:]

"The world is not going anywhere in the sense of the old optimistic progressives or even the old pessimistic reactionaries. It is not going to the 'B.N.W' [Brave New World] any more than to the 'New Utopia.' The world is what the saints & prophets saw it was, it is not getting better or getting worse; there is one thing the world does, it wobbles. Left to itself it does not get anywhere, tho' if helped by the right reformers of the right religion & philosophy, it may get better in many respects. But in itself it is not a progress; it is not even a process; it is the fashion of this world that passeth away. Life . . . is not a ladder; it is a see-saw."

Essays in Honour of Gilbert Murray [ed. Thomson & Toynbee (1936)]—ordered.

10 March 1936

Remember: The Presence, the comfort that came yesterday on the Penberth walk with Angus [Davidson]. 'Like' the real Puck—what Kipling meant & had to reduce for children [*Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906)]? Some-

[1] Rudyard Kipling died on 18 January 1936.

thing anyhow "strong & wise & satisfying." And not to be described at all in any hasty words.

Booklist:
T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry & The Use of Criticism* [(1933)].

21 March 1936

FOR A BOOK—On the Angevins & their passion? On Fulk Nerra or Becket's Heresy—It caught T. S. Eliot's imagination?[2] Response in my mind.

23 March 1936

Sunday—yesterday—discovered, at need, E. F. Benson's book *Visible & Invisible*. Grace & comfort it was & is—but, a sense that—Dunne's—it was an 'advance-guard'—a hint of what was to come & to keep my, not sense, not quite train—my 'awareness' in order.

I wish I knew E. F. Benson.

25/6 March 1936

[From draft letter to Tom Swan, her lawyer:]

My new book [*The Crystal Cabinet*] is finished. Alas too late, after this touch of flu I had at Christmas, for publication till the Autumn.[3]

4 May 1936

Father Walke's book [*Twenty Years at St Hilary*]—a dry lucidity—like a scientific treatise & searching as a probe. A classic?

17 May 1936

One is driven back to one's solitude, work, books, thought.

[2] Fulk Nerra (972–1040), Count of Anjou and the founder of the Angevin dynasty. Eliot's play on Thomas à Becket, *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), would have been fresh in Butts's mind, as she had seen one of the first performances of it in the Canterbury Chapter House in June 1935.

[3] Actually there were several problems due to potential libel actions with the result that *The Crystal Cabinet* was not published until after Butts's death in 1937.

20 May 1936

News today of the resignation of his living at St Hilary of Father Bernard Walke.

[C. H.] Dawson, *Religion & the Modern State* [(1936)].

This is the one & only book that I have found—I have now read it 6 times, to find in it, each time, so much more than the first, second, etc.

25 May 1936

Annie [Walke]'s picture—all that genius hidden away in a barn or a grove.[4]

Write to Cape [publisher] about her.

26 May 1936

John Buchan's *Witchwood* [(1927)]—found when it was a blessedness.

28 May 1936

For a study on Bloomsbury? Clou—why has it become synonymous with a sapless & slightly comic intellectualism, barrenness, the Waste Land? This with what it has done?[5]

29 May 1936

Increase in irritability, not suffering fools, slight self-pity, irritated egoism.

This is like my father; also from living alone, without the discipline of another's constant company.

Order: Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* [(1936)]; Eric Gill, *The Necessity of Belief* [(1936)].

4 July 1936

Gas at the Dentist's. It is queer stuff. Just as one comes round, the sense that one has knowledge, that an answer has been given, that a form of the 'secret of secrets' is known. Yet utterly un-recallable—& it is always like that.

[4] Annie Walke, wife of Bernard Walke, a painter.

[5] Butts completed "Bloomsbury" in 1936 and offered it to the editor of *The Cornhill*, who claimed that Bloomsbury as a group (Roger Fry, Lytton Strachey, Maynard Keynes et al.) were not well enough known (!) to warrant an article. For a discussion of "Bloomsbury" (1998), see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 398–402.

11 July 1936

Today—the worst news of all. Evans [editor at Heinemann] has turned down "Childhood at Salterns" [*The Crystal Cabinet*]—with a 3-page schoolmaster's lecture on style, etc. With, at the end, his real reason—fear of libel action.[6]

Angus is being very wise & kind.

22–3 July 1936

There was [Oxford, then] London, Charles Williams, Tom Swan, the BM [British Museum]. Home here that night, exhaustion. Renouvellement.

26 July 1936

[From draft of letter to her mother:]

[Re] the Julian book, which tiresomely my publishers want to appear before the book on my childhood [*The Crystal Cabinet*].

[On potentially libellous material in autobiography:] Now that won't do. For one thing it is utterly untrue. I never even contemplated writing such a book. (Everything that I want known about my life or my friends is in my diaries, a series extending over many years. These on my death become the property of my literary executor, Angus Davidson, to deal with as he thinks fit; & he is one of the most discreet of men.)

28 July 1936

Butts copies out T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men."[7]

7 August 1936

Pfleger on Dostoevsky & Berdyaev.[8] As I had begun to despair, the éclaircissement came, the old "rapture of the Intellect at the approach of the fact" [Emerson, "The Poet"]! I can't write steadily or decently about it.

[6] Butts also gives an additional reason for Heinemann's refusal: "They expected Freud & Sex; & what they really got was something—this isn't boasting—rather different from anything else of its kind that I've seen. An attempt to show the growth of an imagination, the natural *& the supernatural* shapings of an imaginative child." Butts to Wesson Bull, 10 August 1936, Butts papers.

[7] Butts has done this before, see c. January–February 1926 and September 1927.

[8] Butts had reviewed Berdyaev's *Dostoievsky: An Interpretation* in "An Interpretation," *Life and Letters To-Day*, 11, 58 (October 1934), 120–1.

But I've got it now, the key to the Julian book. Gnosticism! Gnosticism—that was what he was after. Under the humanitarianism, the rational humanism, there was Gnosis. His gnosis. What was his—Julian's—gnosis? That's what I have to find out—& all through—cf. Us—Us—Us.

Lead off with Bloomsbury Essay—Studies of modern tendencies. "On the supernatural" would do; then Methuen's suggestion of developing 'Bloomsbury'—less as persons, more as cultural influences—their relations to Proust, Gide, the Ballet etc.

How should it go? Titles?

"What the Rose did to the Cypress"—i.e. France to England, with final reference to the Surréalistes & Picasso's last period. Fun.[9]

FOR A STORY: Two magic maps—Paris & London.[10]

29 August 1936

These last days—how tired I am—how inclined to indulge the tiredness—[visit from] Chanda 'du temps perdu.'[11] The thing about his return that delighted & that hurt, the 'ambience' he brought with him of a lost world. A cleaner, finer, more in the excellent sense, romantic world. Not only of youth, but of the world the War had not yet had time to kill. To meet it again 16 years later, had loveliness & sadness together.

12 Sunday after Trinity

The end of St Hilary.

I've written nothing about it. It is so clear in my mind & usually in my thoughts. Today tho' was the end.

2 September 1936

Nothing. A dry spell. Even prayer dim & arbitrary. How I need, as Frank Baker said, a living Church close at hand.

[9] In addition to "Bloomsbury," Butts writes an unpublished article, "What the Rose Did to the Cypress."

[10] London magic map already partly outlined in "Brightness Falls." Paris magic map developed in Butts's superb ghost story 'Mappa Mundi' (1938). See 1927 note 7.

[11] See 10 January 1919.

17 September 1936

Lizzie [Marjorie Bagot] in Action.

Accused of showing the story ["The Warning"] around Sennen, I replied mildly & truthfully that there was hardly anyone to show it to.[12] "Angus," I said. "Angus," said she, "always backs you up in the end." Bless him.

18 September 1936

Thinking again out for a walk, for this book I may never write. What the world must have been like with paganism found wanting & the Christian synthesis not yet fully under way. In Julian [the Apostate]'s time.

Order: Christie, *Cards on the Table* [(1936)]; Machen, *The Children of the Pool* [(1936)], Ross Williamson, *The Seven Deadly Virtues* [(1936)], Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* [(1936)].[13]

25 September 1936

Angus told Maynard Keynes about Gabriel. He was sorry, very sorry; & shocked. It is good to feel not quite alone.

FOR A STORY? Pytheas of Massilia coming this way?[14]

1 October 1936

That was a strange, 'charged' walk [with Angus to Nanquidno]. First the valley's loveliness, the golds; then the garden where there were fifty or more butterflies. Red admirals, fritillaries, & a small silver & mauve rarity & bees. All on the superb clumps of Michaelmas daisies, the dahlias. We stood & adored & praised & swallowed it.

Fall on my way back, the broken malachite [cigarette box].

[12] Butts's story "The Warning" was first published in *Life and Letters To-day*, 12, 61 (January 1935), 396–404.

[13] See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 415–6.

[14] See 1932 note 3.

2 October 1936

Remember: Why does one forget?—all the small exquisite helps which have followed me & sustained me all these bad days.

14 October 1936

Eunapius, *Vitae Sophistae*—what one didn't expect! A late, second-rate classical author scattering wonder & interest & delight.

Imagine—little cameos on the lives & adventures of men, once so important, now forgotten. Tales, if not always true, then 'like' truth.

18 October 1936

Van Gogh [*The Letters of Vincent Van Gogh to His Brother* (1927)]—O living world again: "I try to separate things in the dizzy whirl & chaos one can see in each little corner of Nature."

5 November 1936

FOR THE BOOK ["Julian the Apostate"]. 'Feel' of a world into which Xty [Christianity] had not yet entered; culture without Xtn [Christian] Culture. Atmosphere. That is the hard thing to get, in a world saturated with both culture & religion. Today not much help. For now, we are all inheritors of 19 centuries of Xtn assumptions. All this is obvious. To try & get back the unsentimental telling of what centuries of devotion to—say—Jupiter Capitolinus, Athene, Hecate, Roma Dea, "things that go bump" was like.

Order: Sergeant, *Witches & Warlocks* [(1936)]; E. F. Benson, *The Kaiser & English Relations* [(1935)]; Lord Halifax, *Ghost Stories* [(1936)].

9 November 1936

Last night, leaving [Davidson's] No Place at dusk. In the hour of the world & they were not far off.

The storm was still blowing strong, the third day's furious end. Remember: What frightened me, looking down as I hurried into the bay, was the dreadful whiteness of the surf. Surf on the reef, surf round the coast & lifting itself up behind the Brisons. Worst of all, the acres of seethed water in the curve of the bay, on the gently-descending sands. Broken over acres

in arcs & fragments of arcs, torn & ravelled & of that dreadful whiteness. White against ink-purple & ink-indigo & ink-slate. A dreadfulness. The Midgard Serpent getting up. The whiteness in [Melville's] *Moby Dick*.

14 November 1936

Try this again. Truth in order to satisfy, wholly & continually, must be a formula for the whole of truth; not intellectual truth only, but a statement which takes his whole nature into account. This is the meaning in Pascal's saying.

Our state today is due to the fact that we are trying to make purely intellectual formulae do the work they were not intended to do. We take the non-intellectual factors & try & describe them intellectually, i.e. we take man's 'infra-rational nature,' emotional, imaginative or mystical, & derive it, by assumption, from nothing but animal instinct.

This truism cannot be said too often. For we lose its meaning so easily.

Deductions? First of all, why do we do this? The answer is "because we must." We cannot help thinking that way; we want to try & reduce all things to order. Only it's essentially un-intellectual—this applying of reasonable intelligence to subjects it has nothing whatever to do with. And how angry it made Blake!

14 [sic] November 1936

Argument with Angus. What he meant was that both Fascism & Communism are based on violence—but F is based on Nationalist violence & C on internationalist. Therefore, so far, C preferable. Of course, he did not say that. He thought one as bad as the other, but faced with the proportions—e.g. of deaths in Italy & Russia, said (1) that tho' both, in theory, equally bad, yet the mi[?illegible] (in action) violence of Italy & Germany were morally worse as coming from more civilised countries. (2) Russia more excusable as being less civilised. (3) F, being nationalist, more liable to lead to war; C being internationalist, less likely. (Tho' he omits all application of the principle of the class war, & considers the Red Army honestly for defence only.)

My answer was—& pretty badly I made it—for he riled me calling me "anti-Semite," when I hate cruelty as much as he, & only want—not to repeat pious platitudes about how wicked it all is, patting myself on the back for being English—but want to understand <u>how</u> & <u>why</u> it all hap-

pens; why people like ourselves can concur at least in things, actions, which make him & me sick.

However—my answer tried to be that there is a difference between F & C, not only in proportion, but in kind. The snag we struck was (1) when he said C & Bolshevism were not necessarily the same—in fact, that you might have C 'without tears.' (2) Ignoring the principles of the whole thing, its 'ideology' & its sociology. That is without having read either Marx or Engels; & it is impossible to conceive of C, in our age at least, without them.

There is a real difficulty here & I met it badly. Points: Marxism, i.e. C—& can Angus point out another C?—"is to be accepted or denied, as a whole." (Is that true of F?) "It must be all or nothing." (the old-fashioned Bible Christian). Leaving F aside—we have now two rival religious systems.

To return to Angus. C (and B) is the philosophy of absolute materialism. F is not. "The violence of the Revolution in Russia . . . may be russian in method, but characteristically C in idea." The C-W [Communist world?] is C not Russian.

Again C not F is—religion apart—anti-family, i.e. you must take B-C as it stands.

As to F it was action first & theory after. (With C, vice versa). F claims to be the counter-revolution from C.

17 November 1936

FOR THE BOOK ["Julian the Apostate"]. Consider what [Cardinal] Newman said, how after Christianity a new kind of life began for man, & a new kind of time, "continually running over into eternity."

Cf. Dawson, *Progress & Religion* [(1929)]:

> "It is only in Xty [as compared with Buddhism] that the historic element acquires such importance, that it can wholly be identified with the transcendental & eternal objects of human faith. The Xtn, & he alone, can find a solution to the paradox of the inheritance of eternity in time, & of the absolute in the finite which does not empty human life & the material world of their religious signficance & value.
>
> Hence it is in historic Xty far more than in any purely rational creed that the Religion of Progress finds its satisfaction. . . . A new kind of life has inserted itself into the cosmic process at a

particular point in time under definite historic circumstances & has become the principle of a new order of spiritual progress.

The creative process which has reached its end in man starts off again from man in a second ascent, the possibilities of which are yet unrealised & which are to be grasped not by Reason, which lives on the systematization of the past, but by Faith, which is the promise of the future."

Again, practically, even humanitarianism needs this now that liberalism has failed it.

I am slowly learning the difference that has always troubled me, all my life, when I read the work, even the best work, outside the Christian tradition or before it. 'A Something left out' as I felt & did not want to feel; but except in Homer I always felt it, tho' if I had read more, I should no doubt have felt it less.

Yet the lack is there. What Ellis Roberts said when he wrote of the Olympians growing "straight up & down." It made me angry at the time, who half envied the girl whose lover was the North Wind [in the Scandinavian folk tale "East of the Sun, West of the Moon"].

How to get that into "Julian"? What have I essentially to leave out, contrast, put in?

24 November 1936

The tragedy of this age is the division, divorce, between the things of the mind & the things of the spirit. Once they were united—as in More, Erasmus, Campion, Bacon—Or rather, there was no division felt between them.

For a thesis—trace the gradual separation between them, or, more exactly, between science & religion. The time when—as Dawson says—neither looked with suspicion on the other.

29 November 1936

This last time ill. This last week-end.

9 December 1936

Health again: this time—pains in back, between shoulderblades etc. No wind. Aches in limbs, acute & spasmodic. Dislike of tobacco. Much less severe, no sickness, but great depression. Monday & Tuesday only really noticeable. Work of a sort possible. Slight griping pains in night especially.

11 December 1936

Heard the abdication of Edward VIII—one will not easily forget last night. As if a physical shadow is lying over the land, a natural & supernatural sorrow & dread. You can feel the nation's pulse aching—as though a sword has gone through its side.[15]

As a side-issue, the false value & idea of chastity taught me. Taught that it increased my market value when my desire was to be valued for myself, for what I was & could do, not as *intacta puella*. But—

Order: Waugh, *Waugh in Abyssinia* [(1936)]; Ray Strachey, *Our Freedom and Its Results* [(1936)]; Micklem, *What Is the Faith?* [(1936)].

13 December 1936

Last night heard the farewell of the man who was our King. Am afraid, unhappy, angry, 'désoeuvrée' [heavy-hearted] almost past bearing.

15 December 1936

One Curse—people trying to solve 4 dimensional problems in terms of 3; or 3 in terms of 2.

16 December 1936

Sergeant's book on Witchcraft [*Witches and Warlocks*]—suffers from the simple disability to allow for the 'supernatural' under any form, from the existence of God down. No God, no Devil, no spiritual natures. This makes all his conclusion woolly & undecided.

Still, note the change from the complete disbelief of our grandparents, their reduction of the <u>whole</u> series of phenomena to fraud, hysteria, unknown natural laws, catalepsy, suggestion & plain lying. Now the fashion is beginning to be—hypnotism & Murray's 'Dianic cult' plus all the rest.

Machen, of course, worth the whole lot put together.

[15] Butts's monarchist sympathies show that she has changed greatly from her radical socialism of the Great War entries. The parallel of Edward VIII's abdication with the Fisher King, however, shows her lifelong interest in the Grail myth.

1937

4/5 January 1937

A STORY—on 'magic maps'—how would it go? Accounting for a disappearance? Cf. the one on Olympias.[1] Conversation, in first person, in a café in Paris. Dénouement—<u>seen</u> on the Quai Notre Dame.‡

‡Done 9 January 1937.[2]

9 January 1937

Beethoven's VIIth—the mystery, the utter magic, what is it? of the 2nd movement. A new experience in music, 'familiar'—not 'as one's garter,' but a rare adventure or a grace in—what? Life? What sort of life? Out-of-doors? I think so. In the affections? Not so sure. In certain events? Nearly sure. But which? There is <u>something</u> analogous in what Charles Williams conveys—especially in his *James I* [(1934)].

New story ["Mappa Mundi"]—finished, but title, I want, in latin 'Magic Maps.' Now 'mappa' in Mediaeval Latin, I can't find the correct word.

Chartae = records or writing paper—papyrus

mappa = Med[ieval] maps.

magicus = magical. CL [classical Latin] word for maps wanted. There 'mappa' means 'napkin.'

Carta—CL = card.

Stories not done—from last volume, where one or two are marked "done, not satisfactory." Revise.

There remain unwritten:

I A Bolshie child sold into slavery—ancient? modern?

II A Vampire Whose Corpse Disappeared With It.

Pamphlet—On Aldous Huxley's comment on George Herbert (DONE. SOLD!)[3]

[1] Butts originally writes "Olympias" as a story, then incorporates it into *The Macedonian*. Olympias was Alexander the Great's mother. See end June 1931.

[2] This is Butts's story "Mappa Mundi." At Charles Williams' suggestion, on 15 January she sends it to Eliot's journal *The Criterion*. While Eliot rejects it on the 23 February, he declares that Faber is interested in publishing a volume of her stories. Butts is delighted and immediately writes back offering a selection. Eliot's positive reply arrives on 9 March, four days after Butts's sudden death. Inexplicably, although Butts's literary executor, Angus Davidson, promptly urges the publication of this volume to Eliot on the 22 March, it does not materialise. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 425–6.

[3] Incorporated into article "The Heresy Game." See note of 13 July 1934.

III Another Christine Ashcroft & infant story (Angus Davidson's theme)
IV On Barton (blowing up his houses)
Pamphlet—T. S. Eliot's game—Try ER [*English Review*] (DONE)
V Barton—& his Fence

13 January 1937

On programmes, historic or contemporary party politics & especially France just now. Look behind programmes, the promises, honest to dishonest, by which the ordinary man is drawn in—to what such a group represents in the national tradition & psychology. I've been deceived by programmes & policies too long myself. The people who can't get things right au fond who depend on them—people—how hard it is to say without clichés—compare genius & the rules of the game.

Meditations derived from Gunther's *Inside Europe* [(1936)]—superficial in parts but shrewd as hell.

16 January 1937

On the way back from Mousehole, walking from Newlyn to Buryas Bridge—into the gale rising from the Sou-west. A wonder. For there we are on the other side of the watershed of the moors, in a hollow country, deeply valleyed & full of trees. And the gale sung in their tops its full song, but in the gathering dusk one felt nothing but a little stirring. The dark grey & the lights came out, & the Green Tiger caught one up & the music (after Salterns) seemed to have been in my ears ever since I was born, its song as familiar, as orchestrated, as full of meaning—as say the 2nd Movement of [Beethoven's] 5th.

The difficulty that has always haunted me & I have never faced, of writing down these conceptions that constantly occur, yet always on the borderlands of the mind; which, though continual, escape un-pinned down, & so their significance never revealed. When I was younger, it seemed an achievement to know they were there. Lately I have come as it were to clasp them closer, & more than once decide that they are worth recording. Yet at the moment there is not one whose nature I can indicate. They escape as dreams escape. All I can recall now is one of the odd physical sensations that simply happen from time to time, entirely outside my

control, for which the words—& they will still serve—are 'cotton-wool' & 'steel.'

This because there may be some connection. Next time, catch one of them I will!

26 January 1937

Last night—REMEMBER—Waxing moon, dead calm, open sky with horizon cloud ranks. A white night, blue & white, the spring ebb at its lowest, quiet sea with a neater edge. Like some "undiscovered isle" [Chesterton, "The Ballad of the White Horse"]—"like"—"like?" What one cannot say, & in part what one had better not say.

At 10 o'clock I went down to "the Long & Wonderful Beaches" [of Whitesand Bay] seeing many things on the way, about some of which the less said the better. Then down on to the shore, against which & at the foot of the path, on the sands usually above high watermark several thousand tons of new rock have been thrown up.

For a moment I could not find the runnel of sand through them to the open beaches, & began a scrabble over what seemed an interminable stretch of boulders. Cast to one side & found it. Gained the sand. Walked across that space under the moon to the water's edge, the wave-wall high as a man; from where Cowloe Reef stands up like a small black deadly hill.

I do not know what to say about it. One was on the edge of leaving the body & altogether in a different world. The break came at the sea's edge & with each sea. I never knew moonlight was blue before, but then it was all blue. And unspeakable blue—here where one see all the blues, & there is daylight blue that is kin to it, when one thinks of the 'pearl-world.'

The earth was blue, the light was blue—rather the atmosphere through which the light passed. The cliffs were in black sapphire—the orange lights of very few windows still lit, very agreeable to see.

Returning I met a stone, a rock, about 3 foot high, round, standing on end, the shape & the marks of the face of a little old goddess, an idol, a Notre dame de Sous Mer, this time. Perched on her haunches, not unfriendly but most strongly charged. Not so long ago we would have brought her up from the beaches, wreathed her in weed & shells & been very very careful in our tendance. As it was I saluted her with some reverence.

31 January 1937

"It is not surprising that modernism has been defined as the abandonment of the Christian faith coupled with an unwillingness to take the consequences." [Micklem, *What is the Faith?*]

3 February 1937

Remember: A Sequence, out this afternoon on the cliffs. Stuff of a poem, later with luck; stuff of what? Something I believe very enduring.

The last month also, in this midwinter, time & spirit, I've made a practice of walking directly after lunch from the House to the 'Viking's Grave.' At the base of the next headland to the Ped-men-Dhu, on the left of the Irish Lady, a tumulus & a grove, thrown open, its stones thrones back; partly overgrown, but with the shaped headstone very clearly in place.

From these you can see all that there is to be seen, from Cape Cornwall to the Longships.

Today—I always enjoy that walk—the sequence was as follows, its total synthesis, effect—there is no noun quite for it—impossible to describe & hard even to indicate. Say in all, that I had tapped something. Something *sui generis* or unique, wholly external, strange, wholly delightful, strong, that drove me back, my walk half over, from the Old Coastguard Cottages [a few minutes' walk from Tebel Vos], to retrace my walk, step by step, almost as if under orders. Order I doubt if I followed properly & I certainly did not understand.

Full of a fine new life & vitality & pleasure; sure too of a unique experience, however fast it was vanishing from conscious perception. How I long to keep it. It flirts with me on its way off.

The sequence that caused, evoked it—

The silver bars & flashes out to sea; vast dead white waves hurling themselves on the Longships tower. The lighthouse, arduous, black & menacing through foam & mist. On my right, on the look out, the black storm-cone swinging, menacing, sinister. The running water that had run with me, all down the turf path from the top of the moor to the barrow, crystal with small light plants under it. A clot of foam blown in on the grass at my feet; the empty grave, a wave breaking on the shore behind the Irish Lady, the strong hurrying air, violent to danger on the cliff-edge.

All these & others which I have forgotten, each in their order fusing,

poured into me—but rather like one drop distilled, filling my veins—with something entirely new.

So that I can still say—"it is well with me."

5 February 1937

[Sayer's] *Gaudy Night* re-read. Strange how it hurts & pleases, being about, among other things, a real love-affair. And that is over for me, for ever, now that I might have learned a little wisdom. Only memories left, some bitter, some sordid, stupid, ridiculous, sad. One glorious & that the most tragic—Eros, Ερος—Lord, give me all my memories back. I remember too much that went wrong. Even too much—that is out of proportion—my own errors, my own faults. Still, at the last ultimate end, I can't complain.

Or even write decently about it. Lord, if it be possible—

Two good things in that book—"If Troy must fall, let me get out with our Lares & Penates" & "the Honour of the Mind."

Also the quotation, Drayton—for *The Crystal Cabinet*?[4]

Order: Roy Campbell, *Mithraic Emblems* [(1936)]; Macartney, *Walls Have Mouths* [(1936)].

10 February 1937

P. B. Shelley—In anything like a final judgment of that blessed Saint of poetry, on the debit side, note the influence of his day's 'Intelligentsia.' Godwin etc.; & its bad effects. (Cf. the repercussion, John Rodker & me. If I had not believed him wholly, what follies, crimes or near-crimes, & idiocies I should have spared myself & others.) Note it, note it, note it, Godwin & the bétises that followed, the nasty little undersong of the world & their like—Yet which also has a pinch of necessary salt with it.

19 February 1937

This past week's small miseries of illness, compulsory retirement to this chair, but bottles, rugs, tray detested, weak, no energy for work & little for thought—& less for contemplation & least for prayer.

[4] Sayers quotes three poems by Drayton as epigraphs to chapters 7, 13, and 14 of *Gaudy Night*. Which one Butts is thinking of is unclear.

Pure gain—Boswell, my Boswell, in my adorable new edition.

[Irwin's] *Royal Flush: the Story of Minette* [(1932)] enjoyed again.

Grettin' the Strong—the same as Boswell. Not finished yet—but again no disappointment, pure gain.

I see now what I have not always practised—Always at these times read a classic, so it be the right one. The worst day was the one I spent over detective books—including the one of Dorothy Sayers which has always disagreeably affected me, the only one, except *Gaudy Night* & that for other reasons, which has, for me, an unpleasant effect—*Murder Must Advertise*. This, I think, because of some fundamental falsity or over-stress of judgment, & ill-mixed gravity & frivolity.

Ruth Manning-Sanders & the 'fold in space,' i.e. time & space folded up & the stars our walking ground. Einstein in practice.

20 February 1937

Convalescent again—praise Heaven!

TWO NEW COLLECTIONS

I Historic Mysteries
Decline of Spain; Decline of Portugal; Failure of the '45;
Dr Johnson's Youth—cf. Buchan's *Midwinter* [(1923)].

II Heresies—following on *The Spectator* article.

23 February 1937

T Litt Supp [*Times Literary Supplement*] Sashie Sitwell—

"The lute will never sound/ save after the trumpet."

why an extra spondee, a whole extra spondee tucked in?

"And never will soft fruit be here/ till bread need be eaten."[5]

24 February 1937

Dr Johnson—wisdom. On Ossian "if he had kept to oral tradition" & not dragged in MSS [Boswell, *The Life of Dr Johnson*].

[5] These lines from Sacheverell Sitwell's "The Paradise of Alexander" are quoted in the review of his *Collected Poems* (1936), "A Poet's Paradise of Sense," *Times Literary Supplement* (23 January 1937), 57.

25 February 1937

For an ARTICLE? (*Spectator*) How right Kipling was—enlarge this from the ideas of last night. Why can't I quite remember the sentence that set me off? In general—the Intellectual's contempt & his revenge.

The Crystal Cabinet [dedicated to Angus Davidson].[6]

Copies [of MS] to Angus, Ruth Manning-Sanders, Doctor, Tom Swan, Ross Williamson, Betty [Montgomery], Ellis-Roberts?

Proofs—Aunt Ada & Mr Weston-Edwards.

26 February 1937

[From draft of letter to Gabriel Atkin:]

Thanks for the card. I wd have tried to answer you before only for the last 3 weeks I've been really ill. Chill followed this flu. (Never mind about believing it—it just is so.)

Records—if it ever comes to a Gramophone again:
Mozart, *The Coronation Concerto*, *Paris Concerto*, *Jupiter Concerto*.
Beethoven, *Concerto in Ré Majeur*, *Symphony VI*.

On 5 March 1937 Mary Butts dies at the West Cornwall Hospital in Penzance of peritonitis, a perforated duodenal ulcer, and diabetes. Her modest funeral takes place at Sennen Church, where Frank Baker plays the twelfth-century canon "Summer is icumin in" as her coffin is brought into the church. Her tombstone in the cemetery of Sennen Church now carries the epitaph from Blake's "The Crystal Cabinet": "I strove to seize the inmost form."[7]

[6] *The Crystal Cabinet* is published posthumously by Methuen in June 1937. For the positive reception of the autobiography and Butts's posthumous *Last Stories* (1938), see Blondel, *Mary Butts*, 426–30, 431–2.

[7] The quotation from Blake was added posthumously by Butts's daughter in recognition of this visionary poet's lifelong influence on Mary Butts's work.

Biographical Outlines

The following outlines focus on each subject's relation to Mary Butts.

William "Gabriel" Park Atkin or Aitken (1897–1937), British artist, musician, writer, and illustrator, educated in Newcastle and Durham University. "In the grim north of England, a very young man made up his mind to come to London and be a painter, not a musician."[1] He studied art under Professor R. G. Hatton at King Edward VII School of Art (now King's College), London. When war broke out he enlisted, continuing his art studies at the Slade after the war. Extraordinarily beautiful in his youth, witty, urbane, and talented, he had a series of homosexual affairs in the 1920s with Sassoon and Keynes amongst others, and met Butts in 1928. They married on 29 October 1930. Atkin was the dedicatee of *The Macedonian* (1933). Their marriage lasted until the end of 1934 when Atkin returned to live with his aunts in Newcastle, a refuge from his long-term alcoholism, which marred his enormous ability as an artist. He died a few weeks after Butts. In the catalogue accompanying the posthumous exhibition of some of Atkin's work, which took place at the Laing Gallery, Newcastle, in 1940, Osbert Sitwell remarked that—as Butts had recognised—"gay and romantic, debonair and sad, fantastic and yet straightforward, grotesque and often beautiful, [Atkin's paintings and drawings] stand witness for him, reflecting for posterity those qualities which his many friends in the world of art and literature and the theatre knew so well."[2]

[1] Butts, *The Crystal Cabinet*, 266.

[2] Osbert Sitwell, Foreword to the *Catalogue of the Loan Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by Gabriel Atkin* (Newcastle: Laing Art Gallery and Museum, 1940).

Anthony (Tony) Bacon Drury Butts (1901–41) British artist, writer and designer. Younger brother of Mary Butts. Tony Butts was clearly an extremely talented artist but lacked single-mindedness. Instead he tried several different ventures, including designing hats and running a film production company, as well as painting a number of pictures, but he never realised his potential. For the most part he was financially supported by his mother, Mary Colville-Hyde, often living with her. His letters to his sister reveal him to be a discerning critic of both her work and that of their contemporaries. He was articulate and witty, particularly in his posthumous *Curious Relations* (1945), edited by his long-term lover the South African writer William Plomer.

Jean Cocteau (1889–1963), French artist, writer, and film director. Dedicatee of "The House Party" (1930). "Not long before the war. . . In Paris, a boy whose beauty was supernatural, was laughing after dinner at a great house. They said: 'Since Voltaire died, there has never been such wit.'"[3] He provided illustrations for Butts's *Armed With Madness* (1928) and *Imaginary Letters* (1928) and one of his two very graceful line drawings of Butts was used on the cover of the first edition of *The Crystal Cabinet* (1937). Butts and Cocteau spent much time together in France, particularly in Villefranche. He was a strong source of inspiration for her work yet clearly also detrimental in that they both encouraged each other's drug addiction in the late 1920s, requiring detoxification cures on several occasions.

Edward Alexander "Aleister" Crowley (1875–1947), British occultist, poet, and author. Self-styled Great Beast 666. Butts's initial admiration for Crowley diminished after her residence at his Abbey of Thelema at Cefalu in Sicily in 1921 where she studied magic under his tutorship. Crowley described Butts as "a large white red-haired maggot," and referred to her and Maitland as two "absolutely hopeless rotters. They called themselves writers, and imagined they were working if they retired solemnly after breakfast and produced half a page of piffle by lunch." In fact Crowley clearly valued Butts's occult knowledge, see 1921 note 15. Crowley also

[3] Butts, *The Crystal Cabinet*, 267.

[4] *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, ed. Symonds and Grant, 969. Aleister Crowley, *Diary of a Drug Fiend* (Sphere Books Ltd, 1972), 336. See G. Legman, *The New Limerick* (1977), 57.

lampoons Butts in limericks in his unpublished diaries, no. 36 of which opens: "A bootiful lydy named Butts" (20 June 1924).[4]

Angus Henry Gordon Davidson (1898–1980), Scottish translator from Italian, art critic for *The Nation and Athenaeum*, biographer of Edward Lear (1938). Worked at the Woolfs' Hogarth Press from 1924 until his resignation in 1927 (just in time to avoid being dismissed). Secretary of London Artists' Association from 1929. The dedicatee of *The Crystal Cabinet* (1937), Davidson was Butts's close friend and confidant in Sennen from 1935 onwards, much of the time with Harcourt Wesson Bull, a friend of Butts's from France. As her literary executor he tried (with no success) to bring about the publication of a volume of her short stories, which T. S. Eliot, on behalf of Fabers, had expressed interest in just before her death.

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888–1965), poet, critic, playwright, and publisher.

Eliot's relationship with Mary Butts was a long, though sometimes equivocal, one. As early as December 1919 she was writing of him to her aunt as a "friend" and "a very remarkable man," and the following year, as co-owner (with John Rodker) of the Ovid Press, she published Eliot's second book of poems, *Ara Vos Prec* (1920), helping to establish his literary reputation in England.

In many ways they had much in common. Their writing careers, as she observed in her journals, followed parallel paths. Both used the Grail legend as a means of studying the spiritual condition of the modern world (he in *The Waste Land* [1922], she in *Armed With Madness* [1928]); while later they both became converts to Anglo-Catholicism. But these points of convergence never resulted in any great personal warmth. "T. S. Eliot . . . the only writer of my quality, dislikes me and my work, I think," wrote Butts on 25 December 1927. Butts's vivacity certainly contrasted with Eliot's reserve, but the differences were also philosophical and artistic. In particular, Eliot did not share Butts's view of the importance of place, or her spiritual view of the English landscape.

As editor of *The Criterion* and later as a publisher at Faber and Faber, Eliot turned down several of Butts's works, including her historical narrative, *The Macedonian*; and declined to write an introduction to the reissue of *Ashe of Rings*. In February 1937, however, he expressed interest in publishing a short story collection by Butts. Had her sudden death not prevented this, Eliot might have done as much for Butts's permanent literary reputation as she had done for his.

Ford Madox Ford (born Ford Hermann Hueffer) (1873–1939), British writer, critic, editor, and publisher. Editor of *The English Review*, 1908–10 and later *the transatlantic review*, 1924. Lover of the British writer Violet Hunt before and during the war. Despite Butts's disappointment at his refusal to recommend *Ashe of Rings* to Duckworth Press in 1919, Ford was a lifelong admirer of Butts's work, publishing some in *the transatlantic review*, which was largely financed by his then partner Stella Bowen, a friend of Butts. One of his parties in Paris was the inspiration for Butts's story "Ford's Last Dancing" (1998).

Roger Eliot Fry (1866–1934), British artist and art critic. Member of "Old" Bloomsbury. Set up Post-Impressionist exhibitions in London in the 1910s, which introduced modern French art to Britain. Established the Omega workshops where both Nina Hamnett and Wyndham Lewis worked for a time. As he was to a number of other artists and writers, Fry was a friend and supporter of Butts at the beginning of her writing career and she paid tribute to him in "Bloomsbury" (1998). By coincidence, one of Fry's paintings hangs in St Hilary's Church, Marazion, Cornwall, which Butts attended from 1934 onwards.

Douglas Goldring (1887–1960), British novelist, playwright, publisher, editor, travel writer, and critic. Assistant editor to Ford on *The English Review* 1908–9. It is uncertain exactly when Butts and Goldring met. During the war Goldring was first a combatant and then openly expressed his conscientious objection to it from the end of 1915 onwards and he became friends with other similarly minded writers including Miles Malleson, Rodker, and Gilbert Cannan. He left for Ireland when conscription was introduced in 1916, returning to England only at the end of the war. His early novel *The Fortune* (1917), introduced by Aldous Huxley, was "the first, most successful, attempt to dramatise the position of the C.O."[5] An early and lifelong admirer of Butts's work, Goldring suggested that Chapman & Hall publish Butts's first collection of stories in 1923. Goldring was the dedicatee of *Several Occasions* (1932). Although often inaccurate, Goldring is to be praised for being one of the few of Butts's contemporaries to remind his readers of Butts's contribution to Modernism in works such as *South Lodge* (1943) and *The Nineteen-Twenties* (1945).

[5] Ian Patterson, 1997, Cultural critique and canon formation, 20.

Jane Ellen Harrison (1850–1928), British classical scholar and lecturer in classical archeology. One of the early women "stars" of the British academic world, she was highly regarded in the modern period. Her two major studies, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903) and *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of the Greek Religion* (1912)—in which she interpreted Greek myth in terms of archeology—were a lifelong influence on Mary Butts.

Mireille Havet de Soyecourt (1898–1932), French writer and actress of precocious talent and sensibility recognised early by her godmother the Russian writer and translator Ludmila Savitzky, Jean Cocteau, and the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire, who corresponded with Havet while she was still a teenager. Indeed his death from influenza on the 9 November 1918 along with the deaths of other friends in the Great War heightened her preoccupation with death. Following the Armistice Day celebrations in which she felt unable to take part, she wrote: "Les vraies larmes montent et abondent maintenant que s'affirme l'absence continuelle des morts que la paix ne nous rendra jamais dans cette vie où nous les aimions."[6] Her works include "La Maison dans L'Oeil du Chat" (1913) and her novella *Carnaval* (1922). Several of her poems were set to music by the American composer John Alden Carpenter (1876–1951). She had a series of primarily lesbian relationships often with aristocratic French women. Friend of Chanel and Jean Cocteau. Played "La Mort" in stage version of Cocteau's *Orpheus* (1926), which Butts attended. First met Butts in 1927 but they became lovers in 1928 after the breakdown of Havet's passionate relationship with a Scotswoman, Robbie Robertson, who later that year married Pierre de Massot. Initially the relationship between Butts and Havet was mutually supportive intellectually and creatively but this deteriorated as their drug addiction escalated. By the time Butts left France in June 1930 she had become suspicious of Havet, who was increasingly paranoid. She died in Montana, Switzerland, on the 21 March 1932.

Aldous Leonard Huxley (1894–1963), British writer, critic, and editor, grandson of the British scientist Thomas Huxley. Assistant editor on *The Athenaeum*, 1919–20. Butts met him at one of the parties at Eton when

[6] Mireille Havet, 12 November 1918, in *Guillaume Apollinaire/Mireille Havet Correspondance*, ed. Dominique Tiry, 23.

he was a master there. She shared with him an interest in exploring the concepts of time and the effects of "relativity" on the moral development of society. She wrote two articles on his work: "Aldous Huxley," in *Scrutinies II*, ed. Edgell Rickword (London: Wishart & Co, 1931), 73–98, and "The Heresy Game," *The Spectator*, 158 (12 March 1937), 466–7.

Montague Rhodes James (1862–1936), British academic and ghost writer, director of the Fitzwilliam Museum 1893–1908, vice-chancellor of Cambridge University 1913–15, and provost of Eton from 1918 onwards. From the time Butts first read his *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (1904) and *More Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (1911) James became an important influence and reference point for her and she wrote on "The Art of Montagu [sic] James" (1934), one of the earliest appreciations of James's work. She wanted to dedicate "With and Without Buttons" (1938) to James but she died before it was published.

James Alexander Cecil Maitland (died 1926). Writer and adept apparently born in Davos, Switzerland. Major love of Butts's life and source of creative inspiration. Dedicatee of *Ashe of Rings* (1925). Information about Maitland is sparse and gathered from a number of memoirs. His father was an ex-priest. According to Crowley, he had been a planter in Java. During the Great War he seems to have served alongside the Scottish regiment the Black Watch, during which time he met Brian Lunn at the Officers' Camp at Catterick, Yorkshire. He then worked in the Censor's Office. He wrote on Joyce. In *The Crystal Cabinet* Butts wrote that "not long before the war . . . in a bungalow near Java Head, a young Scotsman with an eyeglass, with heavy shoulders and delicate hands was investigating a poltergeist."[7] Maitland lived with Butts from 1921 until their separation in 1925. He committed suicide the following year.

Sergey Maslenikof. Little is known about this White Russian refugee whom Butts met in Paris in 1926 and whom she supported financially from then until the late 1920s. Butts wrote: "Not long before the war . . . In Russia, a pageboy with black curls and eyes the colour of green ice, went down to the cellars of his grandmother's house to watch the snakes fed."[8] Meeting him in Paris in the 1920s, the British painter Robert Med-

[7] Butts, *The Crystal Cabinet*, 266.
[8] Ibid., 266–7.

ley described Maslenikof as "a refugee, sad, lovable and funny—he designed sequin embroideries for the best 'houses', but he had never learned how to make money and was usually broke."[9] He was the model for Boris Polteratsky in *Imaginary Letters* (1928), *Armed with Madness* (1928), and *Death of Felicity Taverner* (1932).

Ethel Colburn Mayne (187?–1941), Anglo-Irish writer, journalist, and translator whose first short story, written under the pseudonym Francis E. Huntly, appeared in the *Yellow Book* in 1895. Little known today, Mayne was well respected during her lifetime. She was a close friend of Violet Hunt and may have met Butts through her. Butts first mentions her in 1919 and they both have a story included in *Georgian Stories 1922* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1923): Mayne, "Lovell's Meeting" and Butts, "Speed the Plough." After losing touch in the 1920s, they became close friends again when Butts returned to England in 1930. Mayne nominated two of Butts's novels (*Death of Felicity Taverner* [1932] and *The Macedonian* [1933]) for the Femina Vie Heureuse prize, and, although neither was successful, Mayne reported to Butts that both Violet Hunt and Osbert Sitwell supported her nomination.

Betty Montgomery (1862–1945), born Alberta Victoria Ponsonby, was the eldest child of Queen Victoria's private secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby. She spent her childhood in the formal atmosphere of Victoria's court, chiefly at Windsor, before her marriage in 1891 to an army officer.

It is not clear how or when Mary Butts came to know Betty Montgomery. The connection may have been literary. Montgomery wrote at least one volume of poetry: *The Rose and the Fire: Poems and Chants* (1908) was published by Maurice Browne's Samurai Press, which also published work by John Drinkwater, Harold Monro, and other future Georgian poets. Alternatively, they may have met through Butts's work for the National Council for Civil Liberties during the Great War, as Montgomery's brother, Arthur Ponsonby (later leader of the House of Lords [1930–1935]), was a radical Liberal Member of Parliament and a leading figure in the anti-conscription movement. The friendship flourished after Butts's return to England in 1930. Montgomery had recently been widowed and was again living in Windsor (where she may have been granted a "grace and favour" apartment within the Castle grounds). Butts

[9] Robert Medley, *Drawn from the Life*, 70.

visited her there, and Montgomery was a faithful and valued correspondent during Butts's sometimes lonely years in Sennen Cove, introducing her to the work of Charles Williams. Butts wrote about Montgomery: "any mixture of elder sister and friend I could never properly describe" and celebrated their friendship by dedicating *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* (1935) to her.[10]

Sir George Gilbert Aimé Murray (1866–1957), Australian classical scholar and translator of Greek plays who argued for neutrality at the beginning of the war. Murray was instrumental in achieving a more humane governmental response to conscientious objection. His work on Greek religion and, later, his political commentary are central to Butts's development as a writer. Butts reviewed his *Aristophanes* in "The Magic of Person and Place," *The Bookman*, 85, 507 (December 1933), 141–3.

Ezra Loomis Pound (1885–1972), American poet, reviewer, and editor, central to the invention and development of what is now known as Modernism. While Pound had met Rodker in 1915, Butts appears to have encountered him for the first time in November 1917, very likely at a party given by Stella Bowen and Phyllis Reid at their flat. Butts and Pound admired each other's work, corresponding into the 1930s, and Pound promoted Butts's work long after her death. See Blondel, *Mary Butts*, various. Butts reviewed his *Make it New* in "'Mr Ezra Pound Is the Goods,'" *The Sunday Times* (18 October 1934), 12.

Richard Ellis Roberts (1879–1953), British writer, editor, and critic. Biographer of Stella Benson (1939). Literary editor of *The New Statesman & Nation*, 1932–4 and *Life and Letters To-day*, 1934. Roberts had been an admirer of Butts's work since the publication of *Speed the Plough and Other Stories* (1923). He recognised the significance of her work: "'The Dinner Party,' 'In Bloomsbury' and 'Friendship's Garland' are stories which, if the generation to come show any curiosity about our society, will take their place beside *The Waste Land*, *The Poor Man* and *Those Barren Leaves* as documents of revelation."[11] In addition to becoming a friend from 1933 onwards and introducing her to Naomi Royde-Smith

[10] Butts to Ada Briggs, 27 April 1933, Butts papers.

[11] Richard Ellis Roberts, "Short Stories," *The New Statesman & Nation*, 3, 5 (12 March 1932), 340.

and Rose Macaulay, he secured reviewing work for Butts and published a number of her stories. Butts particularly praised Roberts's essay in *Orthodoxy Sees It Through*, ed. Sidney Dark (1934) in "A New Vision," *Time and Tide*, 15, 21 (26 May 1934), 675–6.

John Rodker (1894–1955). British poet, novelist, publisher, translator. Born to Jewish immigrant parents in Manchester, Rodker moved to London at the age of six, "where he went to school and at the same time helped his father [David Rodker], who kept a corset shop in the East End. He left school at the age of fourteen, but his thirst for knowledge led him to attend evening classes, at which he learned French and German, as well as the rudiments of science."[12] Friends from this Jewish community included the poet Isaac Rosenberg and the painters David Bomberg and Mark Gertler. In addition to writing plays and poetry in the 1910s, Rodker was an active socialist, campaigning alongside G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc in the Bethnal Green by-election of 1911. Then, as Butts pointed out: "Not long before the war . . . In London a pale lad of great beauty determined to turn his back on Whitechapel and on Jewry."[13] He was involved with the avant-garde dance and theatre and lived with the Jewish dancer and actress Sonia Cohen in London from November 1913. Their daughter, Joan, was born in 1914. It is unclear exactly when Rodker and Butts met; probably early in 1916, and their relationship from July 1916 until the end of the Great War was conducted mostly in secret due to Rodker's conscientious objection. The following summary of Rodker's movements during this period will clarify a number of Butts's otherwise hermetic comments.

John Rodker was arrested in the spring of 1916 for refusing to attest for military service and imprisoned briefly in Aldershot from where he escaped and went into hiding (by July 1916) at the Trevelyans' home in Surrey. On the 15 November he reappeared in London where he eluded the authorities until April 1917 when he was rearrested and sent to Wandsworth Prison for desertion. There he went on a hunger-strike before accepting so-called work of national importance, in his case back-breaking work with a shovel at the Work Centre at Princetown on Dartmoor from October 1917. Exactly when he left Dartmoor is unclear. He

[12] Marie Bonaparte, in Patterson, 1997, Cultural critique and Canon Formation 1910–1937, 40.

[13] Butts, *The Crystal Cabinet*, 266.

was certainly back in London by the spring of 1918. He may have been given some leave. Butts became pregnant at this time and they married on 10 May 1918. After this Rodker "absented" himself a second time, later remarking, "For half a year, till the end of the war, in fact, I was a deserter."[14]

Butts and Rodker worked on Rodker's Ovid Press from 1919 to 1920. After the birth of their daughter, Camilla, and the breakdown of their marriage in 1920 Butts and Rodker separated and divorced in 1927. Although acrimonious at first (Rodker's two-year affair with the British aristocrat and publisher Nancy Cunard [1923–5] led to some acerbic comments by Butts) they were on friendly terms from the end of the 1920s until Butts's death in 1937. Rodker remarried twice, first to the psychoanalyst Barbara Low and then to Ludmila Savitzky's daughter Marianne Savitzky-Bloch. A possible explanation for this series of relationships (highlighted by Butts in her reference to their intimacy—see 9 July 1920) may well have come from Rodker's dislike of intimacy which he himself recognised: "Of course, one gets out of life what one puts into it, & as I am merely an observer, intimacy makes all things tiresome quite soon, children, men or women, but perhaps I throw myself into new relationships with too much elan & that always exhausts one, sooner or later." Also: ". . . people are delightful and charming only one must not become related to them—"[15] Rodker earned a small and precarious income from writing and publishing (he set up two other presses, the Imago and the Casanova). The significance of his role and position as a Modernist writer and publisher has only seriously begun to be addressed in the last decade, particularly by Andrew Crozier, Ian Patterson, and Tom Staley.

Eleanor Rogers. Very little is known about Eleanor Rogers, other than that she was a writer and Butts's lover beginning in 1914. She was working in an office in London in 1916 when the journal opens and was part of Butts's sapphic and feminist circle, which included Gwen Ingram and Wilma Meikle. It is possible—although unlikely—that she was the American poet Eleanor Rogers Cox, who was older than Butts and who died in 1933. The latter was the author of several collections of poems, including *A Hosting of Heroes, and other poems* (1911) and certainly the lines

[14][Rodker], *Memoirs of Other Fronts*, 193.

[15] Rodker to Ludmila Savitzky, 1 October [1920s] and undated [1920s], Dominique Tiry, private collection.

And her hair's red splendor through the shadows
Like to the marsh-fire gleamed and played.
And she sang of the wondrous far-off places
That a man may only see in dreams,
The death-still, odorous, starlit spaces
Where Time is lost and no life gleams.

from her poem "The Dream of Aengus Og," could easily be about Butts.[16] By the time the journal opens Rogers was clearly jealous and overly possessive of Butts, who had begun her relationship with John Rodker. Rogers is the model for Judy Marston in *Ashe of Rings* (1925), who, like her original, is fiercely pro-war, unlike Butts.

Glenway Wescott (1901–87), American writer and critic. One of the first writers of Butts's generation to appreciate Butts's work. Their friendship between 1923, when they first met (when Wescott was, briefly, Tony Butts's lover), and Butts's return to England in 1930 was grounded in their mutual admiration for one another's work. Butts reviewed Wescott's *Good-bye Wisconsin* in "Mr Wescott's Third Book," *The Dial*, 82 (May 1929), 424–7.

Captain James Robert "Jack" White (1876–1940), well-born Anglo-Irish Protestant whose father had served as governor of Gibraltar. White himself served with distinction in the Boer War, but later became involved in Irish Nationalist politics. In 1913 he organised a workers' militia (the Irish Citizen Army) to protect picket lines from the police. During the Great War he worked for a time with the Red Cross in France, but after the Easter Rising of 1916 attempted to bring the South Welsh miners out on strike in order save the life of his friend James Connolly, one of the Rising's leaders. For this he was sentenced to three months in Swansea Jail, where Mary Butts wrote to him as part of her NCCL work. After his release they continued their friendship, which seems to have been based primarily on their shared interest in mysticism. White enjoyed the fact that he was the model for Dick Tressider in Butts's short story "Widdershins/ Deosil" (1924).[17] He is also the model for Jim Bricknell in D. H.

[16] Eleanor Rogers Cox, "The Dream of Aengus Og," in *The Second Book of Modern Verse*, ed. Jessie B. Rittenhouse (1919).

[17] See Ethel Colburn Mayne to Butts, 12 July 1933, Butts papers.

Lawrence's *Aaron's Rod* (1922). According to one of Lawrence's biographers, "In 1918 he [White] would have described himself as both Protestant-Individualist and Irish nationalist; and as both a pro-Russian Communist revolutionary and a Christian who believed in love as the life-force making for unity in everything."[18] This description accords with Butts's probable reference to White as "the man who was looking up the war's progress in the Book of the Prophet Daniel."[19]

White published his autobiography, *Misfit*, in 1930, which does not, unfortunately, mention Butts. In 1934, back in Ireland, he joined the Republican Congress, and later served in the Spanish Civil War—first with the International Brigade and later with the Anarchists.

Charles Williams (1886–1945), British writer, critic, and editor at Oxford University Press. His fiction was concerned with religious and mystical issues, often in the context of the detective genre. He is best known today for his association with C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and other members of the "Inklings" group. Butts's admiration for Williams's work prompted her desire to write an appreciation of his "answer to D. H. Lawrence" (February 1933), to which end they corresponded and met in the mid-1930s. However, she died before completing the essay.

Hugh Ross Williamson (1901–78), playwright, historian, broadcaster, and politician (at one time prospective Labour candidate for East Dorset). Editor of *The Bookman* 1930–1933. Became an Anglo-Catholic priest in 1943. Converted to Roman Catholicism in 1955. Admirer and champion of Butts's work. Dedicatee of *Death of Felicity Taverner* (1932).

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), Irish poet and dramatist. In *The Crystal Cabinet* Butts mentions meeting Yeats shortly before her journal began in July 1916.[20] She and Yeats shared a belief in mysticism and she was particularly influenced by his *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1917). Throughout the journal Butts considers questions about the craft of writing and the role of the writer in relation to ideas raised by her reading of Yeats's work.

[18] Mark Kinkead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile 1912–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 433–4.

[19] Butts, *The Crystal Cabinet*, 95.

[20] Ibid, 154.

Glossary

Aidos: "shame or sense of honour." Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, 3rd ed (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 83.

Anna Perenna, Roman goddess of the new year, sometimes identified with the moon, as the controller of the months that make up the year. "Broadly speaking, Anna, though she cannot be said to *be* the Moon, stands for the Moon-year." Harrison, *Themis*, 199.

Daimôn: a "potency . . . the sheer force that lies behind the manifestations of life." Butts, Preface to *The Macedonian* (1933), in *The Classical Novels* (Kingston: McPherson & Co, 1994), 4.

Drômenon: "A vegetation spirit we call him, very inadequately; he is a divine Kouros, a Year-Daemon, a spirit that is in the first stage, is living, then dies with each year, then thirdly rises again from the dead, raising the whole dead world with him." Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of the Greek Religion* (London: Watts & Co, 1935), 32–3.

Ephebi: the "Chosen young men of the Athenians in the flower of their youth," Harrison, *Art and Ritual* (London: William & Norgate, 1913), 12.

Fourth dimension: A "higher form of space which mathematicians conceive as another direction from which a fourth line may be drawn at right angles to each of the three lines, mutually at right angles, that three-dimensional space permits to be drawn through any point in it. The theory that such a higher form of space exists has important applications in the attempt to solve certain mysterious psychic phenomena. . . . Clairvoyants who see the front, sides, back and every internal point of three-dimensional objects simultaneously see it with the four-dimensional organ of sight." *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology*, 3rd ed. (Detroit:

Gale Research Inc., 1991), 609. Butts's interest in the fourth dimension is lifelong; how to give it literary form remained one of her principal aims.

Heimarmenê: "Heimarmenê, in the striking simile of Zeno, is like a fine thread running through the whole of existence—the world, we must remember, was to the Stoics a live thing—like that invisible thread of life which, in heredity, passes on from generation to generation of living species and keeps the type alive; it runs causing, causing for ever, both the infinitesimal and the infinite." Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, 134–5.

Hubris: "The central idea of Aidôs has various ramifications in the ethics of early Greek poetry. Most of the Homeric words of disapproval mean something like 'excess', or 'going too far', and imply that there are points where a man should check himself. . . . most of all, wickedness is . . . [hubris]. That word is the antithesis of . . . [sophrosynê] and of . . . [aidôs], and like its antitheses it defies translation into our forms of thought. It unites so many ideas which we analyse and separate: and it has a peculiar emotional thrill in it, which is lost instantly if we attempt to make careful scientific definitions. We can understand it, I think, in this way. Aidôs—or Sôphrosynê, which is slightly more intellectual—implies that, from some subtle emotion inside you, some truth or shame or reflection, some feeling perhaps of the comparative smallness of your own rights and wrongs in the presence of great things of the world, the gods and men's souls and the portals of life and death, from this emotion and from no other cause, amid your ordinary animal career of desire or anger or ambition, you do, every now and then, at certain places, stop. There are unseen barriers which a man who has Aidôs in him does not wish to pass. Hubris passes them all. Hubris does not see that the poor man or the exile has come from Zeus; Hubris is the insolence of irreverence: the brutality of strength. In one form it is a sin of the low and weak, irreverence; the absence of Aidôs in the presence of something higher. But nearly always it is a sin of the strong and proud. . . . Other sins, except some connected with definite religious taboos, and some derived from words meaning 'ugly' or 'unfitting', seem nearly all to be forms or derivatives of Hubris." Murray, *Rise of the Greek Epic*, 326–7.

Kêr: the Greek word for a spirit, "a less developed form of the daimôn idea; more a folk-image, less philosophic; represented in popular art as

little fluttering winged bodies, and imagined as a cross between a bacillus, a boy and a ghost." Butts, Preface to *The Macedonian* in *The Classical Novels*, 4.

Korê: a beautiful woman. "She is really the Earth as Woman, passing at different times through all the different normal phases of woman's life." Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, 74.

Kouretes: the young men initiated into the Sacred Mysteries.

Kouros: a beautiful young man. "The Kouros is as prominent among Greek gods as the Korê among goddesses. Apollo, Ares, Hermes are typical kouroi." Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, 76.

Kourotrophos: nurser and rearer of boys/ young men.

Mana: "The *mana* of the Melanesians is very like *orenda* but seems to be somewhat more specialized . . . A man's social position depends mainly on the amount of *mana* he has, either naturally or by virtue of ceremonies of initiation." Harrison, *Themis* 2nd ed. (London: Merlin Press, 1989), 66. For Butts's discussion of mana, see her *Traps for Unbelievers* (1932), in *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings*, 323.

Megistos Kouros: "Greatest of Kouroi, who leads the mystic dance of initiation, is Zeus himself." Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, 76. Also: "the greatest of youths, who is the incarnation of spring or the return of life, and lies at the back of so many gracious shapes of the classical patterns." Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, 28.

Nemesis: "righteous indignation." Murray, *Rise of the Greek Epic*, 83.

Orenda: "In use among the Iroquois of North America . . . A man's *orenda* is his power to do things, almost his personality, yet remaining impersonal." Harrison, *Themis*, 66.

Paian: see 11 March 1933.

Sophrosynê: "It is something like Temperance, Gentleness, Mercy; sometimes Innocence, never mere Caution: a tempering of dominant emotions by gentler thought." Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, 26.

Sortes Virgilianae: "Virgil's fame grew after his death into superstitious reverence. . . . He came to be regarded as a magician, and miraculous powers were attributed to him. The *Sortes Virgilianae* [Oracles of Virgil], at-

tempts to foretell the future by opening a volume of his works at hazard, were from an early date widely practised (even by the Emperor Hadrian)." Paul Harvey, *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 447.

Tabu: "the check, often the ridiculous and superstitious check, but also a technique for dealing with crude power, the dangers inherent in the law of kind. . . . idols, concentrations of mana, were tabu also. Tabu, which in our christian origins was used differently, as in the case of the graven image which 'thou shalt not make to thyself.'" Butts, *Traps for Unbelievers* in *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings*, 326–7.

Virtus: "It is more, of course, than our Virtue; more even than the Roman Virtus. It is 'goodness' in all the senses in which objects can be called good, the quality of a good sword, a good horse, a good servant, or a good ruler." Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, 59.

Wakonda: Harrison begins by quoting the anthropologist Alice Fletcher: "'The Omahas regard all animate and inanimate forms, all phenomena, as pervaded by a common life, which was continuous and similar to the will-power they were conscious of in themselves. This mysterious power they called Wa-ko*n*'-da, and through it all things were related to man, and to each other. In the idea of the continuity of life, a relation was maintained between the seen and the unseen, the dead and the living, and also between the fragment of anything and its entirety.'

Any man may at any time seek to obtain Wa-kon'-da by the 'rite of the vision.' He will go out alone, will fast, chant incantations, seek to fall into a trance, till finally he sees some object, a feather, a tuft of hair, a small black stone—the symbol of thunder, or a pebble which represents water. This object henceforward he will carry about with him. To him it is henceforth, not an object of worship, but a sort of credential, a pledge, a fragment as it were of Wa-ko*n*'-da, connecting him with the whole power represented by whatever form appeared to him in his vision. Certain religious societies were based on these visions." Harrison, *Themis*, 6.

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All significant persons have separate entries. Themes, ideas, and terms central to her work occur within Butts's own entry, as do her writings grouped according to genre. Given that this is her *writing* journal, all references to family members appear under "Butts's relatives," with the exception of her brother, Tony. Space constraints have meant that most painters and composers have been grouped under "art" and "music," respectively. By Butts's own admission: "Stronger than the living the dead surround me, figures of men & gods & I hardly need to say 'distinguo.'" Classical figures occur individually to reflect their *reality* in Butts's consciousness.

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